THE WAYLAND DIETRICH SAGA

THE WAYLAND-DIETRICH SAGA

PART I.

THE SONG OF WAYLAND

VOLUME IV.

". . . Tumbling, I rolled
Heels up, head first, then right side up again . . ."

(See page 137.)

THE WAYLAND-DIETRICH SAGA

THE SAGA

OF

DIETRICH OF BERN

AND HIS COMPANIONS

Preceded by that of

WAYLAND SMITH

Their Deeds in the 4th and 5th Centuries, A.D., as told from the 10th to the 13th Centuries. Collected, set in order, and retold in Verse in the 20th Century

by

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With Two Illustrations by ELIZABETH GOODMAN,
Two Maps by Lieut.-Col. C. H. BUCK,
And an Illustration by the AUTHOR.

PART I.

THE SONG OF WAYLAND.

VOLUME IV.

LONDON, 1925.
Published by ALFRED H. MAYHEW, at the Sign of the "Smithy,"
56, Charing Cross Road, London, W.C. 2;
Printed in Great Britain by R. STOCKWELL, Baden Place, London, S.E. 1.

PR
6003
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1924
v.4

WITHDRAWN
OHIO UNIVERSITY

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ERRATA.

Page 108, line 12, *for* Dionysius *read* Dionysus.

Page 239, line 21, should *read*, "The hill-crest had receded, so it seemed."

ADVENTURE XI.

How the Galleys anchored in a Bay near Roneval in the Island of Leog (Lewis)—How the next day they were caught in a storm and the Quinquereme nigh wrecked, but ere Sunset they made the Haven of Loch Luirbost—How Maximus pitched Camp at the Loch-head and made ready to ride across the Island to Callanish—How Petronius, the mutinous Galley Slave, escaped in the darkness.

Ere night we drew abreast of Colonsay,
Iona passed, and Staffa and Treshuish
Unto Coll's passage west of Mull, where we
Lay all that night at anchor in a bay;
Then, ere the dawn, we sailed upon our way
With a light breeze astern. Ere the sun set
The wind had much increased . . . We shortened sail,
And drave as night came on 'fore a fierce gale
That suddenly fell on us, as a hawk
Doth pounce upon a swallow savagely . . .
But we escaped . . . E'en as the swallow flies,
Darting now here, now there, in skilful wise,
So we dashed on with ease, securely steered
By our bold helmsman and his pilots twain.
The triremes in our wake our course observed
And followed us, though labouring in the seas

That plunged aboard them . . . Yet not one was
swamped.

In Rodil Bay, due north of Ru Renish,
We sheltered 'neath the lee of Roneval,
The rocky headland that guards Leog's Isle
Towards the south . . . When the sun rose next morn,
Far o'er the lesser hills and land-girt bays
We saw the peak of mighty Crionaig,
Cloud-capped, through cloak of mist rise to the north,
And to the left Ben Mhor soared higher still,
A threatening mass of barren jagged rock,
Whose lofty peak yet harboured winter snow.
Vaster than these seemed Clesham to our eyes
Who hid his summit sullenly in fog.
From out the drifting haze that now began
To melt and vanish 'fore the conquering sun
Reared ruggèd Roneval his snow-crowned head,
Whose black flanks shewed thick clad with mountain
pines,
A moment seen, then wreathed in mist again . . .

It was a glorious morn . . . The northern sky
As deep a blue as that of Italy . . .
The sombre gloom of the black rough-hewn hills

Was brightened by the play 'twixt wind and sun
Which chased in merry sport the dancing clouds . . .
Before the southern breeze the white clouds flew
As hunted harts before the eager hounds.
After the fleeting shadows of those clouds[1]
Like golden eagles swooping on their prey,
The sun-beams gleaming flashed, till each dark place
And hollow of the hills was lighted up,
Each cliff touched by their fire . . . From peak to vale,
From high-poised crag to lowly hidden dell,
The racing shadows fled in wild career,
The dazzling sun-gleams close upon their rear
Which like swift swallows skimmed the steep hill's
edge,
Darting and wheeling, circling, rising high . . .
Yet the quick glancing shadows gliding by
Eluded them . . . When the wind, boisterous grown,
Doth dash upon the flock of scurrying clouds,
Their tangled drifting locks it snatching tears
As leaping wolves catch at wild horses' manes . . .
As bent-clawed vultures clutch the fleece of lambs . . .
Dishevelled, twisted, mangled, the scared clouds
Blown by the savage gale drift helplessly

[1] Cf. Ruskin Mod. Painters, V. 145, "The sunbeams fly like golden vultures."

Until dissolved in tears they drooping fall,
Urged by the ravening fury of the wind,
Into Earth's lap, or hide them in the sea . . .
Then doth the wicked mischief-loving wind
Abate his sudden rage, and laughing goes,
Whooping and calling very noisily
Through the ravines and gorges of the hills,
Shouting in triumph o'er his conquered foes . . .
But on this morn the wind was mild and gay,
And though he chased the clouds 'twas but in play.

The grey cliffs capped by short-cropped turf rose high
From out a turquoise sea flecked with white foam,
Whose vivid colour, changing in the shade,
Took on deep hues of purple, mauve and jade.
The morning sun revealed a world of birds . . .
The kittiwakes, now rousing, chattered shrill
In crannies or on ledges of the rocks,
Plastered so close against the cliff's steep face
That it seemed white as from fresh-fallen snow.
Some nesting sat, some fed their new-fledged young;
And others, rising, swooped down gracefully
In widening circles over the blue sea . . .
Blue as the cornflower's petal, streaked with white
By little curling wave-crests, rippling on

To laughing splash against the slippery rocks . . .
Beneath the shadow of the cliffs the sea
Assumed a hundred hues of wondrous green,
Translucent, vivid, deep yet crystalline;
And here and there were purple masses seen
Of seaweed swiftly drifting with the tide.
High overhead the gannets floated slow,
Nigh motionless, remote, as if asleep . . .
But each afar had marked his destined prey . . .
There gliding goes one, head low, tail depressed,
His wings, in wide dominion spread abroad,
Extending far their tautened pinions tense;
Till suddenly he makes resolve to dive . . .
With folded wings unerringly plumb down
As snow falls from a roof, so droppeth he,
A ball of white, with instant deadly force,
Cleaving the air and water like a dart;
Thus strikes the mackerel that he did pursue
And single out from all the finny crew
Which in their shoals near to the surface swim;
So, well content, he makes his meal off him.
The guillemots and stormy petrels dived
Or darted, swiftly wheeling, here and there . . .
Amongst them I saw cormorants and terns,
Black-crested shags and ivory-breasted gulls,

That quarrelled o'er their prey. Then wild and shrill
Came to mine ears their raucous jangling cries,
As greedily these fierce sea-scavengers
Fought o'er dead fish and refuse of the shore . . .
A countless multitude which clutched and tore
With noisy skirls and screams . . . Some, satisfied,
Slept swaying gently on the rocking waves . . .
Some, restless, rose and circled o'er the sea . . .
I heard red-throated divers mournfully
" Kark, kark, kakera," cry right dismally,
To which the screeches of black-headed gulls
And harsh " kirhitt " of sea-terns made reply.
The whimbrels, rushing on their rapid way,
Whistled melodiously with rippling call,
Nor stayed to fish these crowded waters . . . They
Flew northwards ever and soon passed from view.
Here a lone osprey, diving from a height,
Plunged 'neath the waves and drave the gannets off,
His white head glistening as he rose again
Triumphant from the sea, his breakfast won . . .
There thievish skuas chased the shrieking gulls
And forced them to disgorge their captured fish,
Or else turned on them with their sharp hooked claws
And tore them savagely with ravenous beaks,
So did devour them too . . . Up on the cliff

On sandy grass-grown ledges, honey-combed
With rabbit burrows, I saw puffins sit . . .
Their orange feet and beaks gay in the sun . . .
Preening their glossy plumage black and white,
As they sat gossipping each with his mate,
Bolt upright at the entrance to a hole . . .
For these strange birds the burrows share with those
Who are the rightful lords . . . The rabbits go
About their business and no harm is done,
Though their quaint lodgers deem the holes their own.
Now whence the puffins come or where they go
No mortal man can tell, for none doth know . . .
The summer ended they are gone, not seen
As other birds swift winging to the south,
But vanished utterly; to come again,
As suddenly as they had disappeared,
With teazing April when she seeks our Earth
And slyly laughs at us through peevish tears,
Till we know not what means her sauciness,
And think her cross, nor understand her fears . . .
Nor may we solve the mystery of her birds . . .
May be the puffins are come in her train
From where she sojourns in the Blessed Isles,
For when she leaves us it is there she dwells . . .
Thence comes she, bringing her sweet magic spells

That do revive and wake the sleeping Earth . . .
Old Mela told me so . . . I think he knew . . .

Behind the cliffs rose a long sloping hill,
Its brown sides chequered here and there with green,
Cloaked in the hollows with dense climbing woods
Of oak and ash and birch and hazel copse,
That now shewed rosy-brown just tinged with grey
And flecked with palest green to greet the Spring . . .
Into the rocky wall that girds this isle
There ran innumerable tiny bays,
Some widening into lochs that harbour gave
To passing ships that oft had need thereof . . .
Clear crystal streams ran down small lonely glens,
Where, as we passed them, rowing from that bay
Wherein we lay at anchor the past night,
We saw deep pools of wondrous loveliness
Hemmed in by banks o'erhung by rowan-trees,
Where ivy climbed and ferns all intertwined
With honeysuckle and wild clematis.
Huge basalt cliffs pushed out fantastic points;
Behind in a long ridge the grey heights rose,
In whose deep hollows we thought we could see
Some hovels turf-walled and with heather thatched.
A few hill-cattle, goats and mountain sheep

Scattered, we saw, slow browsing roam the slopes;
But not a sign of men, save where the smoke
Curled up from a turf-hut in lingering whirls . . .
I heard Hesperius, our skilled helmsman, say
Unto the Captain, " Sir, 'twere best that we
Gave a wide berth to this curst rocky shore . . .
Shall I steer farther out, by thy good leave?
'Tis like enough that old King Cormac Finn
Hath spies on yonder bluffs who'll mark our ships
And make report." The Navarch said, " 'Tis true,
But we must risk it; Maximus hath said
That we must make Luirbost ere set of sun . . .
And we must use the currents and the tides
To best advantage . . . As for Cormac's spies,
Thou know'st last night I masked the galleys' hulls,
And did have hung about their bulwarks screens
With Grecian emblems . . . Their decks piled with
bales . . .
They will but think us merchant vessels bound
For Stornoway . . . Does not Callanish lie
Upon the West coast? We sail up the East . . .
Up Luirbost Loch at nightfall secretly
We'll pass unseen . . . Who would expect us there?
We'll land the troops in all security,
So strike across the south of Arnish Moor,

Below Eitshal, to Geary na Airine.
There is a track for pack-horses that leads
North of the Avon Dhu, the Black Water;
And thus shall we cross country come to where
Callanish Circle stands ere May Day dawns . . .
God help Lord Maurice else, and those poor souls
Whom Cormac hath devoted to his Gods . . .
The Druid rites are stern and terrible . . .
I know this country, for three years ago
Mine Uncle sent me hither on a raid . . .
I had command then of a small bireme . . .
We landed that time south of Erisort,
Sailing up Seaforth Sound one fine May morn . . .
That loch abreast of us that northward turns . . .

Now, now, Hesperius! Steer the Sea-Horse out,
Keep her head well to starboard . . . The wind drops . . .
Dost hear me? Port thy helm . . . So, not too hard . . .
Ease her a point or so, and go more large.
Mela, go forward! Bid Herenius mark
Our course with watchful eyes for hidden rocks . . .
Have the lead ready that he soundings take . . .
Thou, Felix, signal from the masthead give
Unto the triremes that they keep our course . . .
Pausarius! Bid the Hortators swift strike up[2]

[2] Pausarius = the Boatswain, whose name is Faustus. Hortators = Bosun's mates.

A lively tune and have their whips at hand . . .
Get now your oars to pass! Right lustily
Rouse now thy rowers . . . See that no slave shirks . . .
Keep a sharp eye upon the surly dogs . . .
They have been pampered and grow spoilt of late . . .
The wind is shifting, blowing off the land . . .
Here comes a squall! Stand by to lower sail!
Starboard thy helm, Hesperius! Keep her so . . .
And lest she yaw put two men to each wheel . . .
Hard down, ye lubbers! Swing her head to wind!
Lower the mainsail! Oarsmen, out oars all!
Give way! Ye dogs! . . . Faustus! Keep better time,
Dip all together! Pull! Ye skulking swine!
Hortators! Lash those on the leeward banks!
Lest they should slacken whip them on amain! ''
So roared the Captain . . . Then he called in haste,
As still the fury of the gale increased,
"Right thy helm, Steersman! Jove! The artemon[3]
Has split in twain . . Now, now, the foremast bends . .
It cracks . . . Aft, aft, all hands! O God! 'Tis gone
And three men with it . . . Peter keep their souls
As we cannot their bodies! '' Shouting he
Bade his stout mariners to cut away
The wreckage with their axes . . . It was done

[3] Artemon = foresail.

Right in the face of that fierce driving gale,
While loosened ropes like whip-lashes swung wild,
Scourging the air, now curling, then uncoiled,
Hissing like snakes . . . And all confusion seemed . . .
The hamper of the artemon still hung
Thumping against the deck as the ship pitched,
And plunging tossed, and struggled to win free.
Two of the rowers crushed and bleeding lay
Bowed on their oars . . . impeding all the rest . . .
Faustus the Boatswain, rushing with his mates,
Unchained the dying rowers, let them drop,
While two hortators swiftly took their place
Till the spare slaves, who lay cribbed in the hold,
Might be brought up. Once more the oars kept time,
The rowers urged by fear . . . None wished to drown . . .
Though curst their lot, the wretches clung to life . . .
The quinquereme sprang forward . . . As a bird
From fowler's net released doth upwards soar
And with strong pinions joyful cleaves the air,
So by stout arms impelled our vessel sped . . .
Meeting the heavy seas the galley's nose
Dipped under oft, and great foam-crested waves
Now and again she shipped, which breaking o'er
The head-rail swept her sloping slippery decks . . .
The rowers, drenched and battered, pulled apace,

Keeping good time, the while they cursed and swore . .
The squall passed over, and the Quinquereme,
Like a slim greyhound dashed upon her way,
Her sharp beak cutting through the flying foam
About her bows as she churned up the spray . . .
I saw the Navarch cast a look astern
As he made answer unto Maximus,
Who hurriedly had rushed upon the poop
When the squall struck us . . . " No good, Sir . . .
They've gone . . .
Three of my best men . . . We're short-handed too . . .
But the wind rises and we must not stay
To hunt for them if before Beltane Day
Thou wouldst Callanish reach . . . That we shall do . . .
To-night or sooner we will step new mast
In place of that we've lost . . . As for my men . . .
St. Peter is their Captain now, not I,
And may dispute with Shonè[4] for their souls " . . .
Roughly he spake, but in his eyes I saw
A momentary gleam of deep regret . . .
Said Maximus, " Do as thou thinkest best . . .
I would not lose a man of all our crew,
But we must reach Callanish ere too late,
For I have pledged mine honour thereunto . .

[4] Shonè = a Celtic Sea-God revered in the Hebrides.

Though half our company go overboard
And I myself should perish . . . Navarch, know
I will not fail Count Maurice, my good friend . . .
If I lose him I'd as lief lose my life " . . .
Cried Theodosius, " Thou art in the right,
I'm with thee there . . . Ye Gods! But what a squall! "
Said then Aurelius, " Sirs, go ye below . . .
The wind is freshening and it blows a gale . . .
Here is no place for landsmen in a storm . . .
The deck-house 'neath the poop is snug and warm.
Sirs! Hasten down below . . . Shut fast the doors,
And drink to our good luck . . . But get ye gone . . .
I'll do my best . . . Hesperius! Ready stand
To go about when I shall give the word,
Too near we drift towards that line of surf
That marks some island not pricked on the chart[4A] . .
Ware breakers, man . . . How now, Pausarius!
Urge on thy rowers . . . Lash the dogs! So, so! . . .
Lay her head northwards, keep her north by east " . . .
Herenius[5] shouted suddenly and loud,
" Hard down, Hesperius! Breakers right ahead! "
Sharply the Captain cried, " 'Bout ship 'Bout ship!
Ready about to tack her! . . . Larboard oars!
Backwater forward! Forbear rowing, aft! . . .

[4A] The Shiant Islands. [5] The look-out officer (Proreta).

Pull, starboard all! . . . Ho, steersman! Down your
helm!
Hard over, man! . . . Thank God, she answers well . . .
Rowers, bend now your backs . . . Together all!
Pull like the Fiend! Hortators, mark the time!
Keep them thus, Faustus . . . Flog those shirkers aft!
An she lose way we shall drift broadside on . . .
Ha! She sheers off . . . By Castor, a close shave!
Hoise[6] up the mainsail! So . . Keep her close-hauled . .
Luff ye to wind, Hesperius! . . . Keep her so . . .
Steady, man! Fall not off . . . Thus . . . As you go . . .
Keep her as near as she will lie . . . Veer not!
Paulinus![7] Shorten sail! Hale up the brails!
All hands on deck! Stand by to man the yard!
Up with ye, lads! Yare, yare! and hurry all!
Stow ye the topsail . . . She'll not carry more . .
Wind-taut she stoops too much in this stiff gale . . .
The leeward oars are useless when she heels '' . . .
Thus did Aurelius coolly con his ship.
Then up the shrouds the clambering sailors swarmed,
And lying out upon the bending yard
The topsail furled, and snugged the mainsail down
Until close-reefed[7A] she beat up 'gainst the storm . . .

[6] Hale, hoist, or haul. [7] The 1st officer, or mate

[7A] i.e. the sail partly furled, or brailed up to the yard.

Then slipping down the weather shrouds the men
Came cursing to the deck wet through and cold . . .
" Broach them a cask of wine! " the Captain cried
Unto the Purser Stephen, who obeyed . . .
The mate ran quickly aft, with hurried speech
He muttered something in the Captain's ear . . .
" What's that, Paulinus? Ha! And is it so?
Richerius! Pass the word to frap[7B] the ship!
Two hawsers bend amidships! Yarely now!
Take six turns round with each lest her seams burst . . .
Sirs! Pray ye get below . . . Naught's here to do . . .
Ye hinder us . . . These waves that sweep the poop
May wash ye overboard . . . Then all were lost . . .
Paulinus makes report she's sprung a leak,
But nothing much . . . Prefect! She'll weather it . . .
Once we round Strianach and Kebock Head
We shall be safe enough, I warrant ye . . .
Paulinus, lend a hand . . . That rope's too weak . . .
Bend on another . . . Curse ye, fools! Be quick!
A week's clear pay to those bold hands who shall
Swift[8] the first hawser snugly and make taut . . .
Faustus! The rowers slack . . . The ship falls off . . .
We make lee-way . . . Get some pull out of them . . .
Urge them yet more . . . Dis[9] take the sulky fools!

[7B] frap = undergird. Cf. Smith, Voyage of St. Paul.
[8] to bind round. [9] Hell.

'Tis their lives too . . . Bid the hortators dole
Some wine-sops out . . . To each man three or four . . .
Spare not the wine . . . Then lash them well once more
Or we'll be on the rocks . . . Proreta, there!
Take soundings speedily . . . Eight fathoms? So . . .
We have need to be wary . . . Sound anew!
Faustus, stand by to go astern . . . How now?
'Tis fifteen fathoms? Good! The depth will do . . .
Oarsmen! Give way! Hortators! Keep them so . . .
Art still here, Prefect? . . . Tribune, get him down . . .
Wilt thou not go, my Lord? '' Said Maximus,
" My place is here, I will not go below,
Yet I'll not hinder thee . . . See, we will stand
Lashed to the mast amidships, sink or swim
With thy good Sea-horse, Captain . . . Bring her in
Safe unto Luirbost Sound and thou shalt know
That Maximus does not forget his friends '' . . .

After a little while no land we saw,
Naught but the driving mist and the white spray
Against a heavy darkness of black clouds . . .
Land-lay'd[10] we blindly drave we knew not where;
The wind blew off the shore and beat us back,
And ever it increased and shrieking sang

[10] Just out of sight of land.

Amongst the rigging its fierce wrathful song . . .
It seemed to me as I crouched down afraid
Close to my master's knees, by him held firm,
His hands about my shoulders, ne'er I saw
Such monstrous-looking terrible great waves
As rose to swamp us, yet we rode o'er them
Though labouring much in that wild stormy sea . . .
Upon our main-yard I with horror saw
An apparition as of shining fire,[11]
Two luminous globes that hung about the spar . . .
The Captain, who passed near and heard me cry,
Seeing my terror, laughed . . . " Why, what's to do?
'Tis Castor, lad, and Pollux, Heavenly Twins,
That guard us on our way . . . Nay! That is bad,"
He muttered scowling. " Now there is but one;
That doth portend more storms . . . an evil sign . . .
Fresh tempests shall o'ertake us verily " . . .
I looked and saw but one light brightly shine,
The other vanished . . . But said Maximus,
" Cheerly, good Captain! Frighten not the boy . . .
Let Fate deal each his portion as she will,
For none may turn her from her purpose, yet
Not one of us shall die save by God's will . . .
Let Jove and Fate dispute our destiny,

[11] Cf. Hakluyt's Voyages, Vol. VI., p. 35; Dent, "Everyman" edn.

I am content . . . Yet would I well that we
May yet win safe to harbour for the sake
Of Maurice, my dear friend.''—''And for the lives
Of all on board,'' quoth Theodosius low,
'' Captain, do thou thy best, no man can more . . .
Drowning is death for dogs, not Christian men . . .
And I, for my part, fain would reach the shore.''
The Navarch spake, '' Sirs, that may yet well be . . .
We've rounded Strianach and are abreast
Of Loch Odairn, just north of Kebock Head,
When we make Erisort Loch all shall be well . . .
The gale doth lessen, though I fear me much
These currents prove too strong for our strained ribs . .
See! How the tide hath turned and racing comes
With contrary wind to batter our good ship . . .
Yet she is woulded well[12] . . . She should endure
If those stout hawsers hold '' . . . E'en as he spake
Once more the storm clouds gathered thick and black,[13]
Mist wrapped us close, came rain and driving hail
That scarcely might our steersman see his course.
The raging seas beat on our vessel's bows
And poured aboard, disdaining the storm-mats . . .
Though 'gainst the fury of the waves were stretched

[12] i.e. bound round, frapped, or undergirded.

[13] Cf. Layamon's "*Brut.*" ed. Madden, II. v. 11955, etc.

Strong awnings of thick felt laid over hides . . .
One of our boarding-ladders was dashed loose,
And swept from where by chains it had been hung
Near to the galley's bows . . . Now the wind veered,
But blew yet fiercer on us from the north;
Scarcely I thought our ships might ride it forth,
So wondrous wild the sea, so bitterly
The great waves raged against us . . . Every sail
Upon the triremes we saw slowly stowed . . .
Their hardy seamen clinging to the yards,
Making the gaskets taut e'en in the teeth
Of that wild gale . . . Then bravely fighting on
They trusted to their oars; but we alone
Still shewed some canvas . . . For our Captain bade[14]
To lower now our mainsail's ponderous yard,
Yet leave sufficient of the brailed-up sail
To steady our much battered quinquereme . . .
When this was done we rode with greater ease
And held our own through those tempestuous seas.

Now the clouds lifted; by the golden light
Of the fast-sinking sun we saw ahead
The rock-bound coast of Leog, and there shewed
A narrow opening in the lofty cliffs

[14] Cf. Smith, Voyage of St. Paul, and Acts, xxvii.

That widened as we neared it . . . " God be praised ! "
Shouted our Captain in the Prefect's ear,
" Yonder is Luirbost Loch . . . Come aft, my Lord,
Here on the poop shalt thou now take thy stand
To watch thy ships come safely unto land."
Herenius, standing on the galley's prow,
Shouted instructions that we might avoid
The submerged rocks that lay athwart our path,
Shewn by green water and the curling foam;
On either hand we heard the breakers roar
As they charged down upon that rocky shore;
But steadily we on the starboard tack,
By our full oarage aided well thereto,
Sailed t'wards the channel, and, without mishap,
Just made the entrance with no room to spare.
E'en as we went about, our galley's beak
Nigh scraped a mighty rock that reared its head
As though it sentry of the haven stood
To guard the narrow inlet . . . Yet unscathed,
Smoothly and lightly now we glided on,
For here Herenius knew deep water lay,
Primed by the Pictish pilot's guiding words,
Nor were the waves so boisterous in the bay . . .
Safely at last we came to Luirbost Loch . . .
We hailed that foreign haven as our home,

For in its placid waters we found peace,
Calm after storm, from our hard labour, rest . . .
Now was the night nigh on us, and men lit
The side-lights of the galley, from her bows
And stern great ruddy lanterns slowly swung . . .
" Hoise up the yard, my lads! " the Captain cried,
Cheerful his voice and brightly shone his eyes . . .
" Heave out the mainsail! Shake out all the reefs!
Hoise up the main topsail! Hale home the sheets!
Bear up, Hesperius! With this favouring breeze
We'll make the loch-head ere the night doth fall . . .
Tally the main-sheets! Ease them! Veer more! So![15] . .
Let rise the main tacks! Loose them! Let them go!
Easy all, rowers! Ship oars! Ye have done
Not all so badly . . . Faustus, see each one
Has double rations and a cup of wine . . .
Remit all punishments save for that slave
Who struck an officer . . . What? He is dead?
The better for him . . . And the ship well quit
Of a proud mutinous dog " . . . he muttered low.

Reefs shaken out, beneath full sail we came
Booming along, with thankful hearts I trow,
Helped by both wind and tide, towards a bay

[15] **Tally = haul aft. Veer = let out the sheet.**

That at the west end of the loch-head lay . . .
Then at our Captain's word, " Brail up the sails ! "
In merry mood our seamen manned the yards,
Climbing like monkeys up the shaking shrouds,
And furled the sails with many a jest and song.
Their favourite chanty then I heard them sing . . .
When heaving anchor roared in chorus gay,
In boisterous snatches sung when furling sail
I've heard it rise above the whistling gale . . .
I knew it soon by heart . . . Still in my mind
The verses of it ring . . . Still I see throng
The merry seamen . . . High above the wind
Their cheery voices hear raised in that song :

Ho ! Come aboard our Galley, Sirs ! She's fitted out
for sea !
Your steeds are slung, your arms are hung, as snug as
snug can be . . .
The gear is stored . . . Then come aboard ! We do but
wait for ye !
The wind is fresh'ning off the shore and we're putting
out to sea !
Ready, men !
Man the capstan ! Yo-Heave-Ho !
Heave and hoise, boys ! Let her go !
Cheerly then !

The anchor's weighed, the tide will serve, and our
Galley's running free!
If ye are late ye don't deserve we should wait for the
likes o' ye!
Yo Ho! The Sea-Horse O!
Cheerly, Cheerly, Cheerly O!

Ye need not fear there won't be good cheer on board
this Galley for you;
On fresh meat ye shall dine, washed down by good
wine, just as our Officers do!
'Tis only us and the galley-slaves that get salt junk
to chew!
For our Officers are high-born chaps . . . And let folk
know it too!
There's nothing wrong with our Look-Out Mate . . .
He's a favourite with the crew . . .
The less said the better about our Gubernator,[15A] though
he knows well his work to do . . .
He's a curst sulky dog who poor seamen oft doth flog
and keeps us all in a stew . . .
But our Navarch he's a proper man, and a jolly good
Captain too!

Eho! What doesn't he know?
All slackers well may fear!
From the tip-topmast to the ballast down below

[15A] Steersman and 1st officer.

He can tell where each block and bolt should go,
And whether any tackle be missing or no,
Or if aught has gone wrong with the gear!
Cheerly, men! Ready then!
Yo Ho! The Sea-Horse O!
Heave and hoise, lads! Let her go!
Cheerly! Cheerly! Cheerly O!

Our Navarch is worth more than landsmen ten!
Ye should see him out a-riding, his fine charger firm bestriding,
When with lance and shield he takes the field with the Spanish Cavalry!
He's a full-fledged Tribune on dry land, but a Sailor when at Sea!
When he cons his ship, on the Poop a-taking stand, a most masterful man is he!
'Tis our pride and joy to hear him shout "Ahoy!"
Ho! Rouse up all!
Stand by to haul!
Hoise up, hoise up your small sails, men!
Yarely there with the artemon![15b]
What the devil are ye thinking on?
Will ye let it slack till we're taken aback?
If ye don't look lively . . . Ye sons of a gun![15c]
'Tis water and half rations that I'll put ye on!

[15b] foresail. [15c] Gun = mangon, or mangonel, i.e. a Balista.

Hale aft the fore-sheet! So,
Heave and hoise, men, Yo-Heave-Ho!
Hale home the clew-lines! Then
In with the fore-topsail again!
Yarely, men!
Let go the weather-braces! Stir your feet!
Ye lazy lubbers! Earn your meat!
Loose ye the mainsail! Let her go!
Cheerly! Cheerly! Cheerly O!

"That's the way a Galley ought to go!"
Yo Ho! The Sea-Horse O!
"Hale and hoise, men! Don't be all day!
Get too the main-tack and belay!
Cast off the main-brace and main-topsail!
Hale aft the main-sheet and see ye don't fail
To heave and hoise and tally O!
Ease your helm, steersman! And go more large!
D'ye think you're steering a pleasure-barge?
Steady, men, steady! As you go!'
Cheerly! Cheerly! Cheerly O!

Now they've come aboard our Galley the soldiers want to know
If the old Sea-Horse upon her course is likely to go slow?
The land-lubbers are asking that, but we cry, No! *No*! NO!

Just bide a wee and ye shall see how a Quinquereme doth go!
Though devil a bit will they see of it when they're lying flat below . . .
For down in the hold we do make bold all sick men to bestow . . .
Cheerly then!
Way O! Cheerly O!
Heave and haul and mark her go!
Whether or no a breeze doth blow . . .
Yo Ho! The Sea-Horse O!
For if the wind fails to fill our sails
Our oarsmen know well how to row . . .
Ready, men!
Or if they don't we'll larn 'em so!
Cheerly, then! Cheerly, cheerly, cheerly, O!

The Bo'sun and the Bo'sun's Mates
See that ne'er an oarsman shirks nor waits . . .
When they get the order to let 'em rip
The Hortators' flutes and hammers are heard . . .
They make the galley-slaves quickly strip
And bend to their oars till they get the word,
" Oars to pass! Oars out! Down oars! Give way!

Up oars together! What! Would ye stay?
Here's one for the knave who thinks he can shirk!
And three times three for refusing to work!
With a whistling thong both sharp and strong
That shall tickle your ribs and score shoulders along
Till ye row in time to the Bo'sun's Song,
Give way together! Ye Rascals! Row!"
Cheerly, men!
Steady, aye steady! And keep her so!
Cheerly! Cheerly! Cheerly O!

Says the Prefect to our Navarch, "Make your Galley faster go!
I'm rather in a hurry to catch a slippery foe . . .
And, by the Lord! Since I came aboard, I find your oarsmen slow!
The beggars look half-starved, meseems, and make but a sorry show!"
Says our Navarch to the Prefect, "Sir, I would have you know
There's naught can beat our Sea-Horse when a following wind doth blow . . .
My Quinquereme flies like a dream! By Jove, Sir, she can go!
And as for yon slaves it is for their sins they are sent here to row" . . .

"My Quinquereme flies like a dream! By Jove, Sir, she can go!" (See page 28.)

Yarely then!
Yo Ho! The Sea-Horse O!
Way O! Lads! And let her go!
" Oarsmen, 'vast rowing! Lay on your oars!
Steady, men! "

The Prefect is looking with questioning eyes . . .
" Jove! How the beggars pant! Mark ye their sores! "
The Rowers sit cursing and a-gnashing of their jaws . .
In their pain they are fain to hear once again
The thrice welcome order, " Ho, Oarsmen! Ship oars!
No more need ye row the Sea-Horse, O!
Bo'sun! Wine-sops dole! Pour in each slave's bowl
The black broth left over and let 'em swill . . .
Yet not too much, lest they row but ill . . .
But the Prefect cries to our surprize,
" Don't stay the poor devils from taking their fill! "
Says our Navarch, " Sir, you pamper them, but have it as ye will! "

Cheerly then!
Cheerly, cheerly, cheerly, O!
Now shall our Galley gaily go!
Cheerly, men! Merrily then!
Yo Ho! The Sea-Horse, O!
Steady! Steady! And keep her so!

The wind is sharp, trim we the sails . . .

Our Proreta is wary, his eye never fails . . .
Hark! How he loudly the Helmsman hails!
" The breeze shifteth landward . . . Look out
for squalls."
Hear ye not how it moaning rises and falls!
Our Navarch shouts, " Ye lubberly louts!
Haul down, haul down the main-top-sail!
Let go your lee-braces! Cast off your bow-
lines!
Hear ye not how the wind in the rigging
whines?
Brace your weather braces, men! Let go top-sail
sheets,
Look lively! Ye're not strutting Roman streets
Dressed out in your best to brag of your feats! . . .
I pray ye, Prefect! Get down below!
For truly, Sir! I would have ye to know
Here is no work for a landsman to do . . .
Ye do but hinder me and my crew!
Luff your helm, steersman, and veer no more!
Keep her as near as she will lie!
Let the Sea-Horse shew 'em how she can fly!
Touch the wind lest we lag behind!
Fall not off but keep her so!
Steady, man, steady! As you go! "
Cheerly! Cheerly! Cheerly, O!

Now into the Bay doth our Galley sail!

Yarely then!
Yo-Heave-Ho! Cheerly, O!
Ready, men!
"Hale down, hale down the fore-top-sail!"
O Ho! The Sea-Horse, O!
Steady, steady! And keep her so!
"The fore-sail lower away amain!"
We're booming in on a leeward tide
With hope of booty and golden gain . . .
A goodly haul! Plenty for all!
The Prefect has sworn the loot to divide,
And our Navarch promises extra beside . . .
Hark to his call! He doth merrily cry,
"Your gear make clear! All hands stand by
To lower the main-yard! Now, lads! Look spry!
Cast off clew-garnets, bunt-lines and all!
Loose leetch-lines and lifts! Ho! Midshipmen! Haul!
Haul on the capstan to lower the yard!
Make the yard fast! Land's in sight at last!
Bo'sun! Over your oarsmen keep good watch and ward!
Bid the Hortators strike up and merrily play!
"Oars to pass! Oars out! Down oars! Give way!
Give way together! Ye Dogs! Nor stay!
Ho, Bo'sun! Lash 'em all round again!

Till they pull together with might and main . .
We shall lose the tide an they lagging bide . . .
Give way, ye Rascals! Give way! Give way!
All hands stand by to brail up the sail!
Avast your heaving! Aloft with ye all! ''
Yare, boys, yare! O haste to the call!
" Up with ye, men! '' Cheerly then!
Cheerly, cheerly, cheerly, O!

Then aloft we go right merrily, O!
Yo Ho! The Sea-Horse, O!
And we man the yard with a cheerful heart . . .
'Tis half struck already to give us a start . . .
And each of us sings as he takes his part,
" Ho! Brail up the mainsail! Make fast and sure!
We'll not need to go to sea any more,
Nor shall we heed though the Captain roar . . .
Till we've spent the gold we have in store!
Though little enough is a seaman's pay,
'Twill serve to get jolly on, cheery and gay! ''
So steady, boys, steady! As we go!
Merrily! Merrily! Merrily, O!

Our Galley hath come to port at last
Through stormy seas . . Through the tempest's blast . . .
" Easy all, Rowers! Ship oars! Avast!

Our toil is over, our troubles past . . .
Eho! The Sea-Horse, O!
She has run into port so merrily, O!
Heave to! The Galley's Crew!
Man ye the capstan, lads, Yo Ho!
Come up the capstan! O slack away!
Pay cheap yon cable! Nor be all day!
Cheerly, men!
Veer more, my lads! The Anchors let go!
Ready then!
Steady, men, steady! And keep her so!"
Land-locked we lie and out of the tide
Our Sea-Horse doth safe at her anchors ride . .
Wo Ho! The Sea-Horse, O!
Cheerly! Cheerly! Cheerly, O!

"Troops! Fall in there! Boat-gangs! Prepare!
Smartly now! Yarely now! Gates undo!
Man the boats fore and aft! Stand by falls, ye two!
Lower the boats! Load up many or few.
Hale and hoise! The Galley's Crew!
Ware there! Don't stand and stare!
Have a care with those horses, fools! Look what ye do!
Steady, men!
Slack away forward! Slack aft! So Ho!
Ready then!

Carry on! Carry on! And away ye go!"
Cheerly! Cheerly! Cheerly, O!

"Toss oars! Down oars! Give way, men! Row!
Yo Ho! The Sea-Horse O!
Give way together, a long strong pull!
Yarely then! Cheerly, men!
What matter if some of the boats are too full?
A ducking or two no harm would do
Those lubberly soldiers . . . A rascally crew!
Over-paid, over-fed, and right lazy too! . . .
Steady, my hearties! Go steady and slow!
Make ready to land . . . Toss oars there! Bow!
Way enough, my lads! Boat your oars! So Ho!"
Yo Ho! The Sea-Horse O!
Cheerly, cheerly, cheerly, O!

Here we cast anchor, and our ship swung round
Her head to wind . . . The Navarch came to where
High on the poop Lord Maximus yet stood,
Gazing with anxious looks to where the sea
Beyond the headland yet raged furiously.
One of the triremes had now made the bay,
And, setting sail, came swiftly on the tide,
So followed in our wake . . . Said Maximus,
"Navarch, I see but one of all our ships[16] . . .

[16] Cf. Layamon's Brut, ed. Madden, II. v. 11955, etc.

God grant the rest be safe . . . I pray thee hoist
A lantern to the masthead, that it be
A beacon to the wanderers '' . . . 'Twas done,
And like a fiery star the rays shone forth
Into the gathering darkness . . . " Look, my Lord!
Now, now they come.'' The Captain eagerly
Stretched forth his hand . . . We saw then one by one
The galleys round the bluff, and their lights shine . . .
Awhile were more, awhile there sailed in none . . .
Then two, then three . . . "At last,'' Aurelius cried,
" Four acatons[17] I see in safety ride,
And the three triremes lead them . . . All are safe . . .
What if right roughly our good ships were tossed?
Now are we come to port . . . The wind abates,
The weather softens, 'twill be a fair night . . .
Welcome to Leog's Island, Lord . . . And now
I wait thine orders . . . Shall we anchors raise
And row up yon deep creek to land the troops?
There is, I know, some quay or landing stage
For use of traders, that deserted lies,
Unused for many years . . . It will suffice . . .
Or an thou think'st it wiser, give the word;
We'll snug all down and lie out here till dawn.''
Said Maximus, " Too late were that in truth . . .

[17] Light craft.

To-morrow's dawn will see my best friend's death . . .
Nay, we must ride to-night . . . Short is the time . . .
Captain, land us at once that steeds and men
May stretch their limbs ashore . . . Then with good will
I'll bid thee pipe to supper ere we march " . . .
The Captain made salute. His speedy steps
He turned towards the fo'c'sle . . . Suddenly
Seeing where 'neath the forward thwarts there lay
The bodies of those slaves who had been felled
When the foremast had crashed, he cried, " Ho la!
Throw ye this carrion overboard . . . Best tie
Stone shot about them that they quickly sink . . .
Paulinus! Rouse the crew . . . All hands on deck!
Then raise the anchors. Row up yonder creek . . .
Signal the fleet to follow in our wake."—
" Sir," said a sailor, " one of these yet breathes " . . .
E'en as he spake he touched the prostrate form
With his foot lightly, and we heard a groan . . .
Aurelius, frowning, bent o'er it, then said,
" It is that slave whose life is forfeited . . .
Let him go overboard . . . Poor wretch . . . So die
Quicker than he deserves . . . The Hag has set
Her mind on having that we promised her,
So throw him in " . . . Cried Maximus, " Not so . . .
Navarch, I told thee once before that I

Would make enquiry ere this man doth die . . .
Have him raised up and tended properly . . .
Take him below . . . Marcellus, see to him."
As roughly the unwilling mariners
Lifted the half-dead wretch, I saw his eyes
Open and settle on the Prefect's face
With a keen stare, not fierce, but agonized . . .
Yet not delirious, but as though intent
Upon some hidden purpose . . . It seemed strange . . .
I thought he would have spoken . . . But he moaned,
Closing his eyes . . . They bare him thus below
And tossed him on the half-deck callously,
To the hortators calling, " Take your lamb!
We have no time to shepherd your sick sheep . . .
Best get the surgeon to him . . . What a fuss
The Prefect makes o'er one foul mangy slave!
'Twere better far he paid more heed to us
Who sweating toiled to bring him safe to port " . . .
Their grumbling voices soon I heard no more,
For I must sound the call to go ashore,
And all was noise and bustle, as by light
Of swinging lamps that in the rigging hung,
The ship-gates were let down, and with great care
The troop-horses unslung and got to land.

Within two hours or so a Camp was raised
By the metators on the rising ground
Above the Loch. The mensors speedily
Assigned the troops their quarters as was due.
The Prefect of the Camp inspected all . . .
He saw that in its place the Hospital
For the sick soldiers was in readiness,
The surgeons at their posts, their gear prepared . . .
The baggage stored . . . The horses watered, fed,
Then tethered in their lines, caparisoned . . .
In the Praetorian Tent was supper served,
A hasty meal, yet welcome . . . One there lay
On a rough couch apart, nor ate, nor drank
Of the Falernian wine the others quaffed . . .
'Twas Marius, who in bitterness of soul
Lay unregarded, face turned to the wall . . .
That his strength failed him and he could not ride,
His fiery spirit chafed and fretted sore.
Came Maximus unto the sick man's side,
And in his hand a beaker of red wine . . .
" Wilt thou not pledge me, lad? Wish us success?
Thou'st led us thus far, now take well-earned rest " . .
Said Marius, " How may I pledge thee, Sir,
Who cannot play the man? Must I lie here
Like a sick girl while comrades take the field?

Wilt thou not let me ride with thee to-night?
If thou wilt not, my heart is broken, Sir . . .
Oh, shake not thus thy head with pitying looks . . .
Thy pity I want not . . . Thou wilt not hear? . . .
What useless wretch am I! For me no more
The joy of conflict . . . Never more shall I
Back a good horse again, or take my share
In brave adventures, test my wonted skill
With others in our games . . . My strength is gone . . .
How can I help Count Maurice as I swore?
I, a weak useless cripple? Better far
The Picts had ended me . . . Then had I kept
Some reputation still . . . Oh! leave me, Sir . . .
Dost thou not see that I can bear no more . . .
Go, lest thou see me shamed " . . . He turned away,
And hid his burning face in his hot hands,
His shoulders heaving . . . I crept off in haste,
But as I went I heard our Prefect's voice,
Who sternly spake, yet kindly in the end . . .
" Art thou indeed he whom I thought a man?
Caecilius Marius, art thou now thus changed
By passing weakness? Shame indeed 'twould be!
Come, rouse thee, lad . . . Thy drooping spirits urge
And play the man . . . What! Wilt thou have it said
That Maximus was served by foolish boys,

Unused to war, who thought that they could ride
When weak from wounds? Art thou so selfish, Sir,
Thou wouldst delay us for thy sickness? Nay . . .
'Tis not in thee, my Marius . . . Thou art one
Whose honour I have tested . . . Thou dost know
A soldier's duty is first to obey
Promptly his General's orders, though they be
Distasteful and right irksome . . . Harder 'tis
To lie here waiting than to mount and ride,
Yet that must be thy task . . . Come, Marius, come . . .
Sit up and pledge me . . . There . . . That's better . . . So
Drink we confusion to our savage foe . . .
Health and long life to Maurice! Now shalt thou
Rest 'neath the surgeon's care . . . Marcellus, here!
See to mine officer . . . To-morrow's dawn
Thou shalt march with the rest . . . On horseback thou,
Or, at the worst, in horse-litter soft borne,
Shalt with the Legionary Cohorts come
'Neath the command of Victor o'er the moor . . .
To-night I ride ahead . . . Thy hand, my boy . . .
Wish me good luck . . . Come now, Decurion . . .
Aye, thou shalt have the step I promised thee . . .
Doth that content thee? " Marius whispering said,
" Yes, Prefect . . . I am grateful . . . May the dawn
See thee and Maurice safe . . . I will obey . . .

I'll try to sleep awhile . . . To-morrow march
As thou hast said . . . Good luck go with thee, Lord! ''
His weary head fell forward as he spake,
His tired eyes closed, and like a child he slept,
Soft pillowed in the surgeon's kindly arms . . .

Three hours had passed and now on the loch side
The troops were mustered . . . Horsemen to the fore,
Ready equipped to ride . . . Their chafing steeds
Unharmed by the rough passage they had made,
So well and carefully had they been stowed,
Slung, as the custom is, within the holds . . .
Our Foot was left to guard the new-made Camp
And watch the coast. Our Prefect, mounting, rode
To lead the van-guard, with him as our guide
Herenius sat a troop-horse easily,
For he was used to serve on land or sea . . .
Not like Aurelius, who was sailor-bred,
And on a horse looked like a sack of hay,
So awkwardly he rode . . . He had intent
To come a few miles with us, then return
To sleep aboard his well-loved Quinquereme . . .
Then with the dawn o'erhaul her and replace
The shattered foremast, making good her gear.

Just as our leader raised on high his hand
To give the word to march, came running there
Two of the Boatswain's mates . . . " My Lord ! " cried one,
" Prefect ! He's gone . . . escaped . . . he shamming lay . . .
The slave thou bad'st us tend has slipped away . . .
We ran to tell thee . . . We had thought him dead,
Or dying, and thy surgeon said so too . . .
He was but feigning, Lord . . . He hath won free . . .
Leapt overboard, we think, maybe to drown . . .
We saw no trace, though we've searched land and sea . . .
Thou knowest, Sir, that when the troops were gone
The Quinquereme was rowed out from the Quay,
And lies at anchor half a mile from shore . . .
'Tis a long swim if he were wounded man . . .
And faith ! His head was broken, that is sure,
I bound it up myself . . . O mercy, Lord ! "
The babbler cringed as he saw Maximus
Bend his dark brows upon him, red with wrath . . .
Sharply he said, " Left ye him loose, ye fools ?
Loose and unguarded ? "—"Aye, Lord," muttered they . . .

" When was this, knaves? "—"About two hours
ago " . . .
Stammered the second warder . . . " Sir, I know " . . .
The Prefect, frowning, interrupted him,
" Why did ye not report this slave's escape
At once, ye rascals? Would ye save your skins
At the expense of all of us, ye rogues?
'Tis not the way to do it, be ye sure!
Get ye aboard the Quinquereme and go
To your chief Boatswain . . . Let him straight bestow
Fifty well-measured stripes on each of you,
Laid on right soundly " . . . Crestfallen, the men
Humbly saluted him, then silently
Crept from his sight . . . Aurelius, shrugging high
His shoulders, sat as silent . . . Then spake low
The Tribune Theodosius, " What if now
Safely this slave has gained the shore and goes
To tell the enemy that we draw nigh?
Thy kind heart, Maximus, shall cost thee dear,
And Maurice dearer, if this brute gets through " . .
Said Maximus, " Tribune, I've played the fool . . .
I do deserve thy censure, friend o' mine . . .
Thou and Aurelius have the right on it,
'Twere better that the wretch had lost his life

'Neath direst torture than have tricked us thus . . .
Yet though this rascal seek to warn our foes,
We surely can prevent him . . . He is weak,
Our horses swift . . . Come on, Sirs . . . We lose time . . .
Decurions! Give the signal to advance . . .
By word of mouth . . No bugles! . . **Forward march"** ! [18]

[18] For *Roman Galleys and Merchant Ships*, consult Lucan, Lucian, Polybius, Tacitus (Agricola) Val. Flaccus, Vegetius, Virgil, etc. **Also:** C. Torr, *Ancient Ships* ; Daremberg et Saglio, *Dict. des Antiquités.* **For full bibliography, see Final Volume of Notes.**

ADVENTURE XII.

How Maximus and his horsemen rode across the Isle of Leog by night—Of their Adventures by the way, and how they spied on the Secret Rites of the Priestesses of the Moon.

Ere we had left Loch Luirbost, Maximus
Had seen to all, and given strict command
That Victor of the Sixth should order take
With any natives dwelling in these parts.
We rode through Luirbost hamlet and perceived
The Tribune had his orders well observed,
For not a living soul was left therein . . .
Those who resisted would resist no more;
They lay there dead in heaps, the rest as slaves
Were driven fettered, weeping, to the shore,
Howling and groaning very noisily . . .
Their hovels stood as yet; lest they, if fired,
Should warn King Cormac's spies that foes drew near.
Two sentries stood athwart the narrow street
That 'tween the beehive huts a doubtful way
Afforded for our horses . . . It was crammed
With the dead carcasses of beasts and men;
And, to make worse the filth and slush and mire,
Before each hut, as is the custom here,
A dung-heap stood that none might lack manure . . .

Our snorting horses slowly picked their way
Along this slough of death and nastiness.
We saw the sentries' armour ruddy shine
In the dim light of a horn lantern slung
Across the street, upon two pike-staves hung.
The two fixed arms and boldly barred the road,
Their long spears crossed, as loud their challenge rang:
"Halt! Who goes there?" From out the shadows then
The Watch stood forward, and their Captain ran
Swiftly to make enquiry . . . The word came
Promptly enough from Maximus himself,
"Maurice and rescue!" He saluted them
When they presented arms, as custom is;
And as we passed we heard a half-raised cheer,
Sternly repressed for sake of discipline . . .
The Prefect smiled and lightly waved his hand;
He valued much his soldiers' love for him . . .
Bearing great torches flaming on the wind,
A party of the Sixth stood to salute;
Then passed towards the haven, dragging on
Some Pictish boys and women . . . Children ran
Screaming behind them . . 'Fore them bleating trooped
A flock of goats; and cattle too our men
Drave on with pikes . . . The barking yelling curs

Were speared and tossed aside . . . Some older men
Staggered along, their arms fast bound behind,
And tightly gagged; so passed they all from sight,
And we rode on in silence through the night.
Our horses' trappings and our metal gear
Had been well-covered . . . Not by sound or gleam
Should Cormac's spies discover who we were.

The winding track now mounted steadily;
The wind was blowing keenly off the moor;
As yet there was no rain, and now the moon
Was at its full . . . It was past the fourth hour,[1]
About the first hour of the Second Watch . . .
I looked behind . . . The scene was wild and drear . .
Below us lay the loch, its silvery sheen
Enhanced by the black rampart of the hills
That rose in gloomy grandeur on each hand,
Hiding whose summits swept swift whirling clouds,
In torment tossing . . . But in quiet peace
Upon the bosom of the loch there rode
Our little fleet . . I saw their high dark hulls
Ringed round by gems of fire; and rosy gleams
From stern and poop of our great Quinquereme
Were flashing in the tiny rippling waves

[1] circa 9.30 p.m.

That 'gainst her counter brake as though in play . . .
Then, as I looked, those bright lights suddenly
Were quenched, and all was darkness o'er the loch.
The lights on shore that marked the new-formed Camp
Were likewise dimmed, that none of us could see
Where now our comrades lay on sea or land . . .
My hand upon my horse's crupper, still
I looked behind . . . Far off gleamed the wild sea,
A tumult of white foam beneath the moon,
Pierced by black jaggèd rocks that seemed like tusks
Of some sea-monster that would ships devour . . .
Called Maximus, " How now, young Liticen!
Eyes front, and forward, lad! No time to dream " . .
Kindly his voice at first, but it grew stern . . .
" Ride like a soldier, Sir! Thy seat more firm . . .
Else will I send thee packing to the Camp
To learn thy drill anew . . . Dost think that we
Ride on a pleasure-jaunt? " Redd'ning, I rode
Behind him humbly . . . Theodosius smiled
In his provoking way, but said no word . . .
I was ashamed that he should hear me blamed,
For ever I desired the Spaniard's praise,
And craved his favour still as when a child . . .
Though I loved Maximus, mine own dear Lord,
Yet had I rather Theodosius served . . .

Ah well! I got my wish . . . Would I had not . . .
And now I have outlived them both . . . Alas!
For those old days when they were young and friends . .
They were a goodly pair . . . God rest them both!
And grant they dwell in peace and amity
Who never should have parted . . . Woe is me! ''
Dreaming, the old man sat and pondered long
The fate of those once greater far than he . . .
None dared disturb his thoughts . . . Then suddenly,
Rousing he cried, " Where was I? Wool-gathering?
Comrades! Forgive an old man's foolishness . . .
Yes! I rode on as trim as on parade,
My back as straight as were our troopers' spears;
Not twice would I risk blame from Maximus . . .
Yet ne'ertheless I used my boyish eyes
To some good purpose . . . This is what I saw . . .
Before us rolled the moor on either hand,
A waste of heather save where the dark whin
And clumps of juniper grew sparse and few . . .
And everywhere as far as eye could see
Was glint of water . . . 'Twas a land of lakes . . .
'Midst bog and marsh, and swamp and reedy fen
They shone far-stretched beneath the sparkling stars . .
Lakes that like sheets of shining silver lay
And seemed great serpents stretching their long coils

As glittering they crept between the hills
That to the North and South confined this moor.

Herenius was our guide; right well he knew
The Isle of Leog, for his mother came
Of Pictish race, an Epideän born,[2]
His father was a young Centurion,
Who served 'neath Lupercinus long ago;
Hirtius his name, killed in the Border wars.
The mother by her folk was brought again,
An infant at her breast, to Leog's Isle,
And by her side a tiny urchin ran . . .
Two sons she gave to Hirtius and to Rome . . .
Against her will she lived, by all despised,
Apart, as though a stranger, 'mongst her kin.
In bitter mood she taught her elder child
To call himself a Roman. Hence he loved
Not her own people but his father's folk . . .
For she, though Pictish born, had Roman heart,
And had loved Hirtius more than her own land . . .
Fain had she taught her younger boy to hate
His Pictish kindred, but in vain her plan.
Cormac took measures that her second son
Should be reared in his Court. He claimed the lad

[2] Cf. Skene, c. Scotland, I. (Epidii = Ebudeans, i.e. Hebrideans).

For service due in his picked Body-Guard . . .
For spite, to vex her soul, he petted him . . .
Proud grew young Tarla, and with cool disdain
Despised his mother and his brother scorned.
Herenius as a youth had roamed the Isle
And knew it well. When he became a man,
Stung by the taunts and mockery of his kin . . .
Who let him live as being but a gowk,
For he was cunning and did folly feign . . .
And fearing Cormac's wrath, who cast on him
A right malignant eye that probed his thoughts,
He left the land of Alba secretly,
And to the Romans gladly did resort.
Service he took in Nectaridus' fleet . . .
Lately made Count of all the Saxon Shore . . .
Therein he won renown in naval wars,
Yet lacked promotion, interest having not.

Now by his side ran bound the unlucky Pict . . .
A native was this man of Leog's Isle,
And Maximus had thought it was worth while
To bring him with us, that by sharp fear urged
He might disclose more than Herenius knew;
Yet most he trusted in Herenius' skill,
In whose sure hands the Navarch left us when

He parted from us, riding to the shore,
Just when we topped the brow of a steep hill
And saw, as I have told ye, Arnish Moor,
For so is that heath called in Celtic tongue.
We skirted it to southward and rode on
Beneath the moon. To the right, though far ahead,
Rose the bare gloomy slopes of Eitshal's Mount;
And, on our left, a net of waterways
And gleaming lochs reflected the cold stars
Whose myriad eyes looked down contemptuously . . .
Or so it seemed, to my perturbèd mind,
That was right weary and full sore opprest . . .
Oft-times these vanished for a space as though
They closed them weary of the sordid sight
Of puny men who marred the Earth's fair face
With their mean quarrels and their petty quests.
Yet as we rode I argued with myself,
That we, at least, in this strange land that night
Rode to put down great evil, stablish right,
And free poor captives, who in anguish dire
Were doomed to die to slake the Devil's ire . . .
Such foul and bloody sacrifice was sure
Against God's will . . . I felt my brain on fire
In thinking on it, and with eager hand
I gripped the hilt of my long trooper's dirk

That hung at my right side in lieu of sword.
So with changed mood I rode, and on before
I saw, though dimly, in the gathering gloom,
Our noble Prefect ride, my gallant Lord . . .
Ah, Maximus! How well we loved thee then!

Now came thick darkness on us, and the moon
Hid behind heavy storm-clouds . . . Wind and rain
Beat in our faces . . . In that blackness we
Pursued our road but slowly, painfully.
No living soul we met, no sign of men
We saw or heard upon that wind-swept moor . . .
Once, when the moon shone out, a moment free
From the mad clouds that sought to smother her,
We saw a herd of the hill-cattle fly
Startled o'er that lone heath, roused by our troop . . .
A wondrous sight of wildly tossing heads,
And curving horns, and shaggy unkempt hides . . .
Small sturdy beasts, black, red and dun and tan,
With here and there a fair cream-coloured one,
Shining beneath the moon . . . Lowing they fled
Across our path, then vanished in the mist,
As from their foaming muzzles the warm breath
Rose up in wreaths of fog that made them seem
The strange fantastic creatures of a dream . . .

So, like dissolving shapes they slipped away,
Till faint and low we heard their bellowing
Far up the glen . . . Then silence once again,
Save for our horses' hooves that squelching sank
Nigh fetlock deep in the wet spongy turf;
For now our way had ceased to be a road,
It was but a grass track through swamp and bog . . .
O'er saddle-girths our steeds went caked with mire,
And ever and anon a swift hill-stream
Must needs be forded . . . Yet not deep these seemed,
Though somewhat swollen by late heavy rains.
Said then Herenius, " Lord, we near a place
Where lies a hamlet of the Pictish folk . . .
So well concealed they burrow underground,
We might almost ride o'er them and not know
Nor see their round-topped hovels till too late . . .
But this knave at my stirrup says he kens
A small track that doth branch off to the North
Towards the hills . . . I scarce remember it,
For it is many years since I was here . . .
I think I used it once when chasing deer . . .
Wilt thou essay it, Sir? Then no need were
To slay these guiltless folk in their first sleep,
Or risk that fugitives warn Cormac Finn . . .
But as thou wilt, my Lord . . . I wait thy word " . . .

Said Maximus, " If thou canst trust that Pict,
Take this new track . . But mark him close and well . .
He bears a sullen look and has scant cause
To like us or our purpose." Silently
Herenius rode ahead, his shoulders bowed . . .
I think his thoughts flew back into the past,
Maybe he wondered if his mother lived,
Long time it was since he had seen her face.

Now was the going bad and promised worse . . .
As we rode up the glen with swooping roar
A deluge burst about our muffled heads
That beat about us soaking to the skin.
Now lightning blazed . . . the Heavens seemed afire . . .
We heard loud thunder booming in the hills,
Long rolling echoes, followed, ere they stilled,
By fiercer flashes of swift red-forked flame,
And in yet greater volume poured the rain.
Straight as our lance-shafts the sharp-piercing hail
Drave in our eyes, nigh blinding steeds and men . . .
Like arrows from Olympus, shot in wrath
By angry Gods to bar our purposed path . . .
Despite our heavy cloaks wet through we rode,
Our troopers hoarsely grumbled, deep though low,
Damning the weather and their sorry fate

That brought them in this land of mist and storm . . .
" Well is this curst land called the Watery Isle,"
Muttered the sullen Andragathius,
" 'Tis a fool's journey this " . . . He had said more,
But as he spake we came to where a stream
Swept thwart our path . . . Scarcely we saw its course,
So black the darkness, but we heard its voice,
Brawling and threatening. Then Herenius said,
Shouting the words above the flood's hoarse roar,
" Lord, we must cross it, for on its left bank
Doth run the track I spake of . . . And above
There is no way . . . So wide is yonder loch
That in a day's ride we'd not compass it."
Then by dim lantern-light we boldly tried
That perilous passage. Swollen rushed the stream,
Bestrewn with snaggy boulders was its bed;
But we won through in safety, not one lost,
Though once the water o'er our saddle-girths
Rose, and nigh swept six horses from their feet . . .
While some of us yet struggled in the flood,
With hand and voice hard urging on their steeds,
I saw a shadowy form close at my side . . .
It was the Pict who acted as our guide . . .
By cunning wriggling he had loosed his hands;
Thus from Herenius' saddle-strap set free,

He trusted to his sure and agile feet
To save his head . . . He was mistaken there . . .
E'en as he crept, ere I had time to call,
Herenius spurred his horse upon the man,
With sharp lance poised he ran the poor wretch through,
Who writhing strove to rise . . . He had no time . . .
E'en as his mouth gaped for a rousing yell . . .
For in his death-throes he would warn his kin,
Whose burrows lay so close in the hill's side . . .
Herenius raised him twisting on the lance
And gripped his throat, then with his sailor's knife
Gave him his death. In silence the Pict died . . .
A choking sob . . . No more . . . Herenius drew
The spear from out his back and sternly smiled;
Then in the rushing torrent cast the corpse,
That whirled it round and we saw it no more . . .
Quoth Theodosius, " That was neatly done;
But where, Herenius, shall we find fresh guide? "
Frankly he spake, " Tribune, I can but try
To lead ye by my dawning memory . . .
That fellow is best dead . . . Picts ne'er forget,
Nor yet forgive their wrongs . . . I will be bound
He had his scarred wrists and his sore-wrung head
Still rankling in his mind . . . The wily snake

Had roused yon hamlet had I not been quick.''
Said Maximus, " Lead on, we trust thy skill . . .
Waste no more precious time . . . Too much we've lost.''
I saw Herenius' face looked stern and drawn
In the red flicker that the lantern cast,
Borne at his saddle-bow . . . I wondered why,
Seeing the stream was crossed, and he had won
The praise of Theodosius for his skill . . .
In half an hour I thought my riddle solved . . .
Before us lay a mighty raging flood
Impassable to any, and its roar
Was like the ocean beating on the shore
When it doth hollow boom 'mongst rocky caves;
Or, as if hundred cataracts did fall
From a great height . . . " It is the Black Water,
The Amhuinn Dhu, broke loose; I feared as much,''
Muttered Herenius, " Lord, it is in spate . . .
A cloud-burst in the Hills . . . Ah! It is fate!
Oh, who may strive against the Elder Gods
When they in their just wrath put forth their might?
We would defraud them of their fore-doomed prey,
And we are like to pay the price ourselves . . .
My hands are wet with that poor wretch's blood . . .
All said and done, he was my countryman . . .
This wild adventure bringeth down a curse! ''

He shuddered as he spake, and gloomily
Sat hunched up in his saddle, so was dumb.
Said Maximus, and angrily he spake,
" How now, Proreta! Hast thou coward turned?
'Fore God! Man, rouse thee! . . Shew us the best way
To cross this blustering river . . . Knowst thou not
Some path to circumvent it? Speak up, Sir!
Or I will have thee broke . . . By thine advice
We took this goat-track " . . . Said Herenius then,
And sulkily he spake, his dark face glum,
" By any other road it were the same . . .
The Amhuinn Dhu is but a little stream,
Gentle and playful in his usual mood,
Unless by sudden storms he is thus urged
To rage and fury . . . Then a monster he
Who would devour us . . . South there lies no way,
For he doth circling rush to Roag's Loch,
Cutting our passage thither . . . If we ride
Northwards we come upon the Little Loch,
Loch Beg 'tis called, and much I fear the same
Hath burst its bounds, and fed by Eitshal's streams
Floods all the country . . . One chance have we still . . .
And thou canst break me, Prefect, if thou choose,
An it shall fail . . . Yet wherein lies my fault?
Fate takes a hand against us "—" Well, Sir, well?

What is this chance? Say on!" Herenius said,
In dull and sullen tones with hanging head,
For he resented sore the Prefect's words,
" We must ride north and take our chance of flood,
Skirting the flanks of Eitshal's lesser Mount . . .
'Cross Amhuinn na Ba Moire there should be
A bridge if it yet stand, and we may light,
By devil's luck, naught else, upon the road
That from Callanish runs to Stornoway,
A causeway good, raised high above the marsh . . .
There is a path that borders it, where we
May pass unseen, can I but find this end . . .
But I'm not sure, and scant the time, my Lord . . .
Perchance 'twere better bid a trooper drive
His lance-head through my heart and so have done . . .
Thou dost not trust me, and my course is run "—
"Lead on!" quoth Maximus, "And hark thee, friend,
Take not my hasty words to heart . . . I swear
Thou art a gallant and a loyal man . . .
I ask thy pardon that I spake to thee,
Who art my trusted friend and officer,
With threat'ning words . . . Another time shalt thou
Have proof of mine esteem . . . For God's sake, now,
Put by thy grudge . . . Herenius, play the man!
Find us the road that to Callanish leads . . .

Naught matters else . . . Ah, God ! " Low muttered he,
" Poor Maurice waits and trusts " . . .
So we rode on,
By what strange ways I cannot rightly tell . . .
Sometimes in water o'er our saddle-cloths,
Once by a broken bridge, across three logs
That hung suspended o'er a foaming linn . . .
We lost four troopers there . . . All swept away
Into the howling darkness with their steeds . . .
At times through swamps and miry bogs we rode,
Led by our guide along some old paved way
Known to him as a boy . . . The " Giants' Roads "
He called these causeways, and knew naught of them
Save they were builded in the olden days
And still served well . . . Twice we passed lofty cairns
Piled up with stones, the tombs of heroes dead;
Mayhap he knew their names, was of their kin,
But as we rode no time or mood had we
For tales of eld . . . Our minds were firmly set
On one thing only . . . That by hook or crook
We might keep in our saddles long enough
To reach Callanish ere the fatal morn . . .

Sometimes Herenius erred; and halting, leapt
From saddle, searching like a questing hound

Until he found the landmark that he sought.
Since Maximus had urged him he had gained
Fresh spirit seemingly . . . He led us on,
Unflagging and untired, by devious ways,
Until at length he paused . . . His face more grim
Than I had seen it yet . . . " Prefect," said he,
" Thou hadst better kill me now straight out o' hand . . .
I've led thee wrong . . . Nor know I where we are . . .
These tracks have changed much since my boyhood's days . . .
We can't be far from Roag's Loch, and yet . . .
And yet . . . I cannot trace the path . . . Ho la ! "
With sudden jerk he swung his horse half round,
Spurred to the left, stooped from his steed, and so
Caught by the hair a struggling, wriggling form
That his sharp eyes had seen lurk 'neath a bush . . .
He drew it up across his saddle-cloth . . .
" Ha ! Would'st thou ?" muttered he, and with skilled hands
Tied fast his captive who had struck at him
With a long dirk . . . The steel fell harmless down.
Herenius said, as he tight-gripped his throat
Lest he should yell, " Here is a guide, my Lord,
And our last chance " . . . Said Maximus, " Thou'rt right . . ,

Question the fellow . . . Bribe him . . . Torture him!
Do what thou wilt so that we learn the road.''
Herenius spake in some outlandish tongue,
And by the lantern-light I saw a gleam
Of wonder cross the Pict's wild countenance . . .
His mop of tangled hair stood out all fuzzed,
A ruddy halo round his brutish face . . .
He answered sullenly, so it appeared,
Then sudden grinned and nodded his great head . . .
Herenius said, " Prefect! This man is one
Known to me long ago . . . For he doth serve
My Pictish kindred . . . Fethel is his name,
My mother's serf . . . He tells me that she lives,
He knows each path and pass through these wild
hills . . .
He deems me traitor to the Picts, my Lord;
And so I am, yet for my mother's sake
I think that we may trust him . . . Other help
I see not, Sir . . . He is a sulky knave,
But fears me much . . . As he hath cause to do,''
He muttered grimly, " for he fares to Hell
First of us all if he shew treachery.''
Said Maximus, " Ride on! This chance is given
By God's will, not the devil's, and to Heaven
May lead us yet . . . The Heaven of our desire '' . . .

Herenius set the Pict upon his feet,
But kept his hands fast bound, and by his belt
Strapped him unto his saddle . . . Once more we
Fared on our way, yet scarce with easier minds . . .
In gloomy doubt we rode across the moor . . .
The rain had ceased, the wind had almost lulled,
Though still in fitful wanton gusts it blew.
The moon shone out . . . More dangerous was her gleam
Than the thick darkness . . . Glad were we when clouds
Obscured her light as they fled scurrying past,
Swept o'er the sky by blasts of the upper air
That left the unruffled earth at rest and calm . . .
We came to where the path that we pursued
Dipped down into a hollow through a wood
Of ancient oaks; where tall young fir-trees grew,
And slender birches in abundance too,
On sloping banks above a rushing stream.
Mysterious in the moonshine seemed that wood,
Alive with crawling shadows that crept thick
Athwart our path, then dwindled suddenly
As though they cleared a way, where the short turf
Shone silvery in the light as bright as day . . .
But 'mongst the trees 'twas black as ebony;
Velvety darkness; solemn, still, profound,
From which came strange unearthly murmurings,

And tiny creeping noises that enhanced
The deathly silence that thus thrust itself
Upon our listening wide-expectant ears . . .
We waited for some sound to break that pause;
Some show of life, nay, e'en some sign of death,
Had been relief. At length we heard afar . . .
So distant yet that it but touched our ears
In disconnected faint and broken waves . . .
A tiny humming, throbbing, twanging noise
That mingled with the music of the brook
Which poured its rushing waters through a glen
In the dark shadows that rose on our right.
But at that sound remote our Pictish guide
Stopped suddenly, his swarthy face turned pale . . .
He made a warning sign . . . Our Prefect's hand
Flew instant up . . . The word passed back to halt;
The Pict then led us very speedily
Down a deep shadowed slade[3] into a brake
Of ancient holly-trees grown great and tall . . .
A lofty grove that sheltered all our troop . . .
Here to Herenius volubly he gabbed;
Who, having heard, to Maximus thus spake,
" This Pictish fellow, Sir, tells me he hears
The distant noise of cymbals . . . This way come

[3] East Anglian slade = coombe, i.e. wooded hollow.

Through the dense woodland Druidesses fierce,
The maddened sisterhood, who are akin
To Thracian Maenads and Bacchantès wild.
Not now in frenzied dance with horrid rites
Do they approach us as though drunk with wine,
But with a solemn purpose hither march . . .
They must not see our troop, or all is lost . . .
Too many of them are there to entrap,
For they would bring a host of savage Celts
Upon us speedily by their shrill cries . . .
Let now our riders stand dismounted all,
Holding each man his horse's nostrils fast
Lest one should neigh . . . Then were we all undone . . .
Unluckily they seek their Sacred Pool
Not far from where we stand. Yet it may be
They shall not see us if we privily
Lurk here and make no sound '' . . . Then Maximus
Bade all of us dismount, yet stand prepared
To leap to saddle swiftly at his word.
Meanwhile, urged by his curiosity,
He, with Theodosius and Herenius, crept
Unto the covert's farthest edge, there lay
Beneath a holly screened . . . I also crawled,
Unbidden and unseen, to peep and pry,
Drawn by my fear . . . For better to me seemed

The sight and knowledge of these awful ones
Than to stay sweating in scared ignorance,
Quaking at unknown horrors. Now drew near
The throbbing clanging sounds which seemed to me,
Though strange and weird, not inharmonious . . .
For all the wood was filled with melody
Of cymbals, pipes, and clashing tambourines,
That every moment louder, clearer grew,
Until across an oak glade, 'neath the moon,
Between the tree-trunks we saw shimmering
As of white garments, women's voices we
Heard chanting high, then solemn, deep, and slow,
A sacred song . . . Herenius, whispering, said,
" These are the Gallicenae, Priestesses[4]
Who reverence Artemis, that is, the Moon,
Whom they Kerridwen call . . . That Goddess known
As Isis of the Egyptians, I have heard . . .
By many other names she is revered . . .
What matters it? Are not her rites the same?
They seek Selago, mystic Herb of Gold,[5]
That can disclose strange secrets. Who doth hold
Selago firmly pressed beneath their feet
Shall fall asleep, and sleeping shall discern

[4] Strabo, IV. 198; Dionys. *Perieg.* 570; Martin, *Hist. France*, I. 63 Elton, *Orig.* 2nd ed. 23-25.

[5] Cf. Folkard, *Plant-Lore* . . . 2nd ed. 137, 547.

The language of all fishes, birds and beasts;
And other things shall learn . . . But hush! They
come . . .
Move not a limb, Sirs . . . Keep ye still! Be dumb! ''

Now we heard floating on the soft night breeze
Strange words deep chanted, rising, falling low:
A solemn sound that filled my breast with awe . . .
Though at that time I could not understand
The meaning of the Druidesses' song . . .
Later I learnt these were the words they sang:

Deep rolls our chant as we roam through the wood-
lands . . .
Our Lady Moon pines at our long delay . . .
We search, we search through covert, copse and
boskage;
Old grows the night . . . Too soon will it be day.

We seek that Plant, the mystic Herb all golden . . .
Why is it hidden from our longing eyes?
Are we not worthy? We, Kerridwen's Virgins?
Whom shall we send forth that she win the prize?

See! Here is one, O Goddess, a pure maiden . . .
She shall go forth beneath thy rays divine,
Clad in her innocence, naught else, and with thy
guidance
She shall be safe, far from her things malign.

So to the Pool, the Pool of Blackness coming,
Kneeling she prays; and praying she shall find,
There, where the sky doth stoop to kiss the water,
Golden Selago, Herb of magic kind.

Stay, maiden, stay! With iron thou must not sever
The Herb of Gold, nor cut with knife of steel . . .
With fair white linen cloth thy hand first cover,
Then, with all fitting reverence, lowly kneel . . .

With rose-tipped nail of thy right hand's little finger,
Curved like the Crescent Moon, shalt thou essay
To take the Golden Herb from out Earth's keeping . . .
Now! Now! Thou hast it safely . . . Up, away!

But lave it first in the Black Pool's dark water,
E'en as we lave thee and asperge thee too . . .
With green boughs of the wood we sprinkle water,
For thus Kerridwen bids, and thus we do . . .

Now we twine garlands of the Mayflower round thee,
Lead thee, that backwards safely thou may'st go,
Backwards, lest men should find the Moon's course altered,
And thereby on the Earth brought endless woe.

Fear not, O Maiden! Daughter of Kerridwen,
When the day dawns thou shalt be crowned a Queen.
Honoured and graced shalt thou be in the morning . . .
What the Sun brings thee that shall soon be seen . .

What then if thou shalt never see the evening?
Ah! Is it not thrice blessed to ne'er grow old?
O Daughter of the Moon, the Sun shall wed thee,
Nor shalt thou find thy Bridegroom's love grow cold.

Deep rolls our chant as we roam through the woodlands,
Our Lady Moon, well pleased, doth hear our song! . . .
The Golden Herb of Might we bear in triumph,
We have found that which we have sought so long.

The cymbals hushed, the clashing timbrels ceased;
But still the voices chanted as there came
With slow steps up the glade a slender form,
White in the moonlight, trembling and alone . . .
A little maiden naked as when born,
Without a thought of evil, nor knew she
That any eye beheld her save those who
Had sent her thus ungarbed to the deep pool
Where she would find the Herb of Gold she sought;
For by the custom of these Priestesses
None but a virgin, nude, of tender years,
May cull the Sacred Plant. She bare no knife
Of iron or of steel, for should the Herb
Be touched with such base metal all the world

Would feel its wrath; the shrinking sky grow dark,
And evil fall redeemless on the earth.
Naught had she in her hand save a white cloth;
So came she shining in her purity,
A little trembling, fearing the black wood,
A gentle maid, no Pict, of Celtic birth;
Her long dark hair unbound, a misty cloud
Veiling her ivory limbs . . . Her violet eyes
Long-lashed, downcast upon the shadowed ground,
Searched every grassy nook, each hidden dell,
Until at last she came unto the Pool . . .
A lake of ebony in the deep shade
Of a great branching oak . . . Kneeling she stooped . . .
There on its very verge the club-moss grew,
The Golden Herb, Selago, that she sought.
From where I crouched I could see in the Pool
The shadows of the oak-branches enlaced,
Between whose network gleamed a mottled vault,
Silvered with fleecy clouds that drifted by . . .
Scarcely I knew which water was, which sky,
So clear that limpid mirror . . . I saw too
The maid's own likeness, white as ivory,
Gaze up at her from out that darkling pool,
Transparent, evanescent, as though she
Had for twin-sister a fair water-nymph . . .

A naiad of the neighbouring brook there strayed . . .
Smiling, she peeped a moment well-content
O'er the black water; stooping then she bent,
Hoping to find the herb as she was bid . . .
And now the Gallicenae two by two
In long procession, robed in white, drew near.
Circling about the pool they joined their hands,
So chanted softly, while the maiden searched . . .
Not long looked she before the Herb she found,
And, kneeling down by it, concealed her hand
In the white linen cloth ne'er used before;
So, with her little finger's curving tip,
A symbol of the crescent moon, she strove
To uproot the plant . . . I saw it well enough . . .
It was club-moss, that some call Cloth o' Gold,
Of which 'tis thought, when slowly burnt, the smoke
Is wholesome remedy for ailing eyes . . .
The Druids use it in full many ways . . .
When the young maid had gathered it with awe,
She washed it in the stream, so wrapped it close
In the white cloth and held it high aloft.
Then came the others, holding each green boughs
Of hawthorn, willow, oak and rowan trees,
Which they dipped in the running brook and then
Asperged the maiden, gently sprinkling her . . .

Now round her slim white neck and naked limbs
They twined sweet garlands of the flowers of May . . .
Cowslips and primroses and violets pale,
And violets purple with gold celandines;
Forget-me-nots blue as the noon-day sky,
Daisies pink-tipped and yellow buttercups,
Mingled with hawthorn blossom smelling sweet,
Like faery roses, crimson-specked o'er white . . .
So, as the Moon, by halo circled, shines,
The maiden walked thus garlanded by flowers
Guided by two tall Druidesses who
Held each a hand; for she must backwards go
Who in this rite was the moon's counterfeit;
Lest it should seem the Queen of Night herself
Returned upon her path o'er Heaven's plain,
Which would bring ruin upon Gods and men . . .
Thus slowly went they down the glade and passed,
Still chanting, from our sight through the dense trees,
Till we scarce heard their plaintive melody
Borne fitfully upon the uncertain breeze . . .
Silent we stood for a brief space, nor stirred;
Until a trooper's horse impatient stamped,
Pawing the ground; then Maximus arose . . .
Said Theodosius softly, "A fair sight . . .
Nor is there aught unseemly, aught of ill

In this rite practised 'neath the watching stars . . .
The little maiden tripped as daintily
As though a wood-sprite . . . Where now are
Thy dancing Maenads, thy Bacchantès fierce?
These Druidesses more resemble nuns,
Or Vestal Sisters, in their stately mien . . .
Surely, Herenius, thou hast been deceived . . .
Holy and peaceful are the Druid rites."
Said then our guide, a strange look in his eyes,
Gruffly enough, "Aye! Fair begins the Feast,
But ye know not the end . . . A pity too!
So young a maid, so sweetly innocent . . .
I'd like to save her were it possible " . . .
Said Maximus, " What mean'st thou? Would they hurt
A tender child like that? Come, friends! To horse!
No longer now their hymn rings in our ears . . .
If they would harm the maiden hasten we
To save her ere too late " . . Herenius said,
" Until noon-tide she meets not with her fate . . .
Mount, Sirs, and let us ride . . . I'll do my best
To find Loch Roag, and that speedily "—
" It is full time," the Prefect gravely said.
He gave the word to mount, and we defiled
From out the brake, then trotted through the wood

Until once more we came out on the moor.
The moon had set, yet on ahead we saw,
For every moment now it lighter grew
As dawn's bright spears thrust through the shield of night,
Where the track upwards wound across a hill.
What had passed in the wood a vision seemed,
And as a dream it vanished from our minds;
Though now and then I wondered as I rode
Who the young maid might be and what her fate . . .
I hoped that we might save her . . . Short the time . . .
That ominous glimmer in the East betrayed
The near approach of the unfaltering sun.

ADVENTURE XIII.

How as Dawn drew near the escaped Galley-slave was recaptured and what he told—How Maximus, with a few Comrades, crept to the Cliff's Edge and saw Strange Sights—The Fiery Wheel—And the Standing Stones—How Dawn brake and the Sun came up over the Hills.

Soon would day break . . . Through a faint mist of
grey . . .
That strange and beamless light before the dawn . . .
We saw each other as wan spectres ride,
Our rain-drenched cloaks fresh wetted by the dew.
The wind had lulled, the rain had ceased, a calm
Was all about us . . . In our hearts alone
Was anxious dread and tumult of suspense . . .
Beneath us through the haze we dimly saw
The gleam of water . . . " 'Tis Loch Roag, Sir! "[1]
Murmured Herenius, " To our right below
The Standing Stones of dread Callanish are[1A]
As yet veiled by the darkness, and the brow
Of this steep hill doth still obscure our view . . .
Here in this hollow we may lie concealed
For a brief period ere the daylight dawns . . .
But every bluff and headland round for miles

[1] Cf. Macculloch, *Western Islands.*

[1A] Anderson, *Scotland in Pagan Times, Bronze and Stone Ages*, p. 119, *seq.*; Mackenzie, *Bk. of the Lews*, p. 191, *seq.*

Has watchful sentinels . . . What course pursue? ''
Dismounting, he consulted with the Pict,
Who talked excitedly and pointed oft
Now here, now there . . . His face had cunning grown,
Yet frightened too, his eyes roved restlessly
From face to face, and his broad shoulders twitched . .
Now lacked it but two hours before the dawn . . .
Long since the moon had set, the stars yet shone,
Though faintly, overhead . . . Across the loch
The fresh cool morning breeze blew off the sea.
With anxious face Herenius scanned the ground,
Pausing uncertain, '' Lord, here seems a path . . .
Yet I know not . . This bare-shanked Pict may lie . .
His looks are shifty and I trust him not . . .
What wilt thou that we do? I am not sure
In which direction this hill-path doth lead '' . . .
Said Maximus, '' Thou, Andragathius, stay
With the main body of the cavalry . . .
And, Prefect, hearken! Let there be doled out
The Pictish pounded meat that I bade thee
Have packed in each man's haversack, whereof
The smallest morsel shall prove food and drink,
Serving to stay them and allay their thirst . . .

'Tis heroes' food[1B] indeed . . . When I send word,

[1B] Cf. Dio Cassius, LXXVI. 12, and Maxwell, *Early Chronicles—Scotland*, p. 24. *Biadh-nan Treum* = heroes' food.

But not before, ride down as speedily
As ye may compass it amongst these rocks.
First with a few I'll reconnaisance make . . .
Theodosius, thou . . . Herenius, Publius . . .
He named three more, of whom brave Quentin one,
Decurion of the First Asturians,
Gerontius another, who was born
Of British blood, heir of a noble line . . .
The same who later served in Scythian lands,[2]
And there gat shame through no fault of his own.
After he rose to power for a brief day,
And seized the Empire but to give away;
Then not ignobly perished, killed in Spain[2A] . . .
At this time he served on our Prefect's Staff . . .
The third a Knight of the Jovinians,
Heraclius named, a fiery quick-tongued youth,
Who as Adjùtor served Theodosius,
But later followed Maximus and fell
Fighting the Franks.[3]
My Lord now called to me,
" Quintus, keep near . . . Thy bugle handy, lad!
Leave we our horses, so more nimbly climb
Over these boulders up this rock-strewn hill.

[2] Zosimus, IV. 40. [2A] Freeman, *W. Europe in 5th Cent.*, ch. II., III.
[3] Greg. Turon. II. (9).

Herenius, hold the guide and run him through
If he prove treacherous. Now prick him on,
And make him shew the way . . . Ha! Who comes here?
Seize him! So, Publius, so . . . Hold him! Well done!
No noise . . . Best gag him . . . Bring him here . . .
What thou?
Thou cursèd galley-slave! Haste, Duplicar![3A]
Loose now that stifling gag that he may speak
And tell us all the mischief he has done . . .
But watch him heedfully lest he should give
A warning to the Picts . . . About our ears
They'd swarm like wasps an he gave the alarm.
Now, thou vile scoundrel! Instantly confess
Whence cam'st thou, and what is it thou hast done?
Hast thou betrayed us to the Pictish King?
Thou camest from Callanish, so it seems . . .
What! Art thou dumb? No words . . . Oh, very well,
It matters not . . . Thy guilt is but too plain.
Marcus, take thou a squad of men and go
To yonder oak-copse . . . Take this wretch along,
Strip him and nail him high on some strong bole . . .
Stay not to make a cross . . . The trunk will serve . . .

[3A] Cf. Domaszewski, *Rangordnung d. röm Heeres*, pp. 53-54. Duplicar = a subaltern cavalry officer, ranking amongst the "*Principales*."

I have no time to see this justice done . . .
See thou to it, good Andragathius . . .
First have him soundly scourged as custom is.
Marcus! Make sure that his sly treacherous tongue
Give not the alarm . . . What! Hast thou found it
then?
I thought as much . . . Yet it shall serve thee not . . .
It is too late . . . No mercy ask of me,
Thou foul black-hearted traitor! I spared thee
Twice to my hindrance . . . Marcus, take him straight
And crucify him "—" Wait! " the prisoner said,
" Hear me a moment . . . Mercy I ask not . . .
Traitor thou callest me, yet I, none else,
Can save thy friend . . . Nay! Curse thee! I will
not! . . .
Come, Prefect, make an end . . . Thy troopers wait
To torture me to death . . . Thou thinkst I lie . . .
Well, have it so . . . Nail me to yonder tree . . .
Thou knowest well 'tis 'gainst the last Decree[4] . . .
Thou shalt repent at leisure . . . Not so I . . .
I've borne as much and worse these last ten years . . .
I laugh at all thy torments . . . Not a word
Shalt thou force from me, and Count Maurice dies . . .
He trusted me . . . Thou doubtest . . . So he dies

[4] Constantine I.'s Decree.

In pains far worse than mine . . . Come on, ye swine!
And drag me to my death . . . Aye! Thus do curs
Fall on a shackled bull to mangle him,
Who dare not, were he loose, put their base skins
Within the reach of his sharp curving horns . . .
Why pull ye thus? . . . I come " . . . Said Maximus,
" Hold, Marcus! Drag him not . . . What sayest thou?
Hast thou seen Maurice? Or dost thou but lie
To save thyself? . . . By God! That shalt thou not!
Give me some proof, Petronius . . . How shall I
Trust in the word of a recaptured slave
Who dost prepare a trap for aught I know?
Yet for my friend's sake I will hear thee . . . Speak! "
Said then Petronius surlily, " Knowst thou
This ring I wear suspended round my neck?
I have no other token "—" 'Tis enough,"
Said Maximus, " I gave him that myself . . .
Apollo's stone is lucky, so I'm told . . .
Doth ward off evil, captives will set free . . .
Saintly Jerome hath said so, and he knows " . . .
He took the ring from off Petronius' breast
And held it in his hand to see it close . . .
" Aye! 'Tis that sapphire from far Taphrobane,[5]
From Eastern mines by Indian merchants brought

[5] Ceylon.

To Africa . . . At Carthage bought I it ''—
" Yes," said Petronius, " Carthage . . . That's the
place . . .
Thou wert my officer there long ago . . .
My junior yet my friend . . . Was it not so?
O Clemens Maximus! Hast thou forgot
I was thy comrade then . . . And now? . . . Ye Gods!
Ye Gods! What am I . . . Ah, Sirs! I can't see . . .
My head is whirling so . . . That foremast crashed
Right heavily . . . I think the wound fresh gapes . . .
Would it had killed me, then had I found rest . . .
Wilt give me water, one of you? . . . What! Wine?
I thank thee, Prefect '' . . . Then said Maximus,
" Loose him! Petronius, speak! Lose no more time . .
Marcus! See to thy prisoner . . . Bind his head! ''
Swaying he spake, " Sir, may I hold awhile
Thy horse's mane? So . . . Brief shall be my tale . . .
Finding my warders careless, thinking me
Dead when I was but feigning, I slipped up
On to the deck of your curst Quinquereme,
So heels up, overboard . . . Though stiff and sore,
I was a swimmer practised, swift, and sure.
I reached the strand, and thence, Sir, quickly came
By luck, and guidance of a Pict I found
In whom I put the fear of death, by ways

Secret and swift to where Callanish lies
Over the hills . . . I had a certain means
In which I trusted . . . Say, Lord Maximus,
Hast never missed that onyx ring of thine? ''
Startled, the Prefect looked and knew the ring
That from his loincloth the slave quickly drew.
He muttered, '' Strange . . . I thought I had it safe . .
How gattest thou this talisman? I' faith!
Petronius, art thou the devil's self? ''—
'' Not far removed are any of us slaves
From him,'' Petronius said with ghastly smile,
'' But this ring gat I by right simple means . . .
It slipped from out thy tunic yesterday
When thou passed by my bench, and none but I
Saw it thus fall . . . I snatcht it secretly,
And hid it in my loincloth hurriedly,
Thinking it might be useful . . . Yes . . . A thief
Am I . . . But listen heedfully . . . Unseen by all
I came unto Callanish . . . 'Midst the Picts
Walked as their fellow . . . For by that time I
Had slain my guide . . . No use had I for him
Once I had reached the township, and I thought
His eyes looked shifty, so I made quite sure
With thrust of his own knife 'twixt collar-bone
And neck . . . He made no noise . . I saw to that . . .

I used the ring . . . I knew its story, Sir . . .
I heard . . . Mine ears are sharp . . . Young Marius'
tale . . .
I gained admittance to the prisoners . . .
They die at dawn . . . Sir! It is well-nigh day . . .
Wilt thou that I shall guide ye? Lose no time
If thou wouldst save thy friend " . . . Said Maximus,
And leapt from saddle, " Give me here thy hand,
Lean on mine arm, I will support thee . . . So,
Lead on, I trust thee, Niger . . . Ne'er of old
Wert thou and I aught but the best of friends . . .
I will forget all else " . . . Petronius said,
" Come swiftly o'er the brow and clamber down
Yon steep hill-side; so see, Lord, for thyself
How the land lies . . . Look, if we creep down there
Some feet below the brink of this great cliff
Unto that narrow ledge that lies beneath,
We shall see all that passes in the glen,
And thou canst make thy plans . . . It would be wise
That one of ye should crawling go ahead
And kill the sentry who is posted there . . .
I saw his head but now behind that bush " . . .
Said then the Prefect, " Go, Gerontius!
I promised thee a chance to prove thyself " . . .
Swiftly the Briton slipped through the thick brake,

To come in a short time grim smiling back . . .
In his hand dangling by its tousled hair
The grisly head of a Hill-Pict that stared
With savage eyes and grinning fangs exposed . . .
So cast it dripping at the Prefect's feet,
Who said, "Well done, Gerontius!" Then we crouched
And crept as best we might most cautiously
Through the grass wet with dew, through bracken thick,
And over the crisp heather that did prick
And trip us as we slowly wormed our way,
Painfully crawling, till at last we slid
Down to the hollow half-way down the cliff,
And there lay hidden in a bracken bed
O'ershadowed by dense clumps of prickly whin,
Whence we could watch unseen the vale below.

From where we lay safe hidden in the brake
We saw the misty plain, the neighbouring hills,
The Loch below, begin to take dim form,
Though scarce distinct as yet in the vague gloom . . .
The lower valley still lay wrapped by night
In a thick darkness . . . On the sloping sides
Of the great hills that lay remote and far

We saw a multitude of dancing lights
That quivered in the gloom, and moving fast
Each other wildly chased through narrow vales,
Over the ridges, down towards the plain,
And there, like will o' the wisps, danced o'er the lea,
From out the darkness gleaming eerily.
The wind that blew towards us on its wings
Bare faint melodious echoes as of songs
Chanted by many voices . . . Shouts we heard,
Then down the hill not far from us there rolled
Strange awesome things towards the Loch below . . .
Great wheels of fire that shot forth lurid flames,
And, gaining impetus, did leap and bound
Unto the water's edge where they plunged in;
So hissing, crackling spluttered, and went out,
Dissolved in misty steam that to us shewed
Like clouds of fire arising from the gloom . . .
And all around were whirling dancers seen;
Dark figures that flung high into the air
Bright blazing discs that looked like falling stars;
And others flaring torches madly waved
While loud and long they shouted . . . Now we saw
That on each side of one of these great wheels
There ran two strong-limbed swift-footed tall youths
Who kept it in its course . . . And it was cased

In blazing straw smeared o'er with resinous pitch
That it burnt fiercely with a dazzling flame . . .
Upon its spokes was tied a twisting shape
Like to the stretched-out body of a man . . .
We thought it but an effigy of straw
With entwined withies fastened cunningly,
Till to our ears came ghastly evidence
It was no semblance feigned, but living thing
That burned to death bound writhing on that wheel . .
" What do they? " muttered Maximus, aghast . . .
Said then Herenius softly in his ear,
" It is the Living Wheel of Fire that goes
Into the Loch thus every Beltane Eve,
And also at Midsummer . . . Thus folk say
Shall the corn grow, the harvest ripen well,
And the Sea give his treasure to the land . . .
Seaweed shall be flung high upon the shore
That serveth both for fuel and manure;
And wrecks be cast and fish in plenty caught
That Shonè's servitors may lack for naught,
Due homage paid . . . For into Shonè's arms,
The God of the Deep Sea, do run these wheels
Bearing their offerings consecrate by fire . . .
Aye! 'Tis some living creature on each wheel . . .
Foxes or cats or dogs . . . And on that one

That nearest runs to us is tied a man . . .
Some criminal condemned to death . . . Thus he
Doth expiate his crimes and also serves
As a Burnt-Offering unto the Gods . . .
Now are his torments over . . . See, where he
And the great Wheel are tumbled in the Loch! ''
The waves rose hissing as we looked, and so
The Wheel was swallowed up, while with a shout
We heard the folk climb singing up the hill
To send another blazing shrieking Wheel
Down rushing as before . . . This was their song . . .
The words thereof I learnt in other days
From Mela's lips . . . Now, all confused, I heard
The wild notes ring in mine affrighted ears.

Light we the Wheel![6]
That great Bel may reveal
Himself to His Own
Flash Steel on the Stone!
In the thickness of smoke,
In the flare of the flame,
He comes to His folk . . .
Let us honour His Name!

[6] The *Song of the Fiery Wheel*: metre adapted from a Welsh poem. Cf. E. Davies, *Myth. Brit. Druids*, p. 574, Appendix XIV. (*Aneurin's Song*).

Would ye dare call down shame
That ye light not the Wheel?
Bring brands and join hands!
From the Stone by the Steel
Pass we Fire to the Wheel . . .
Fierce the God's ire
If for Him Fire
We should not light . . .
Let the Red Wheel
Revolving reel
Through the dark night!

Down the hill let it dash!
Let it rush! Let it crash!
That from all ill it keep
The folk of the Gael,
And their cattle and sheep . . .
Now dance we, now prance we,
Sing loudly and hail
The God of the Sun and the God of the Sea,
To whom we pay honour and tribute and fee.

Offerings we make,
Nor must they fail,
Lest the God of the Thunder blast pasture and lea . . .
Though hearts shall quake,
Faces grow pale
With a terrible fear
As the God draws near,

What Shonè doth ask, what Belen demands,
Shall be Theirs, so They bless the work of our hands.

From Lightning and Hail,
From the path of the Wind,
May They shelter our houses, our barns, and our lands!
Bel, be Thou kind!
Offering we'll find . . .
Hark not to the wail,
The cry and the plea
Of the guilty who suffer . . . By their Pains shall we
Be quit of the Curse of the Gods, and go free.

Bring pitch, bring straw!
Ye know the Law . . .
The Victims bind!
Leave none behind . . .
Care not for their fright . . .
Set alight! Set alight!
Let the Red Wheel
Revolving reel
Through the black night!

Now flames the Fire,
Evolving desire . . .
Let it blaze bright!
And the shrill cries
Of each victim that dies
Shall work as a Spell

To awaken Great Bel
That on us shine His Light.

By the power of His Might
Help shall we find,
Corn have to grind,
For He shall replenish the Earth with His Grace . . .
The Harvest shall ripen if Bel's glorious Face
Shall shine on our fields . . . Then for His Delight
Let the Red Wheel
Revolving reel
Through the still night!

Give Shonè His Share . . .
Of His Wrath else beware!
For the God of the Sea claims Tribute of ye,
Else your lives will He take in lieu of His Fee!
He asks but His Right,
Deny it who dare!
Then kindle the Wheel,
With a roar and a flare,
All blazing with light
Let it rush to the arms of the God of the Sea,
And to Him be a Portion, an Offering, a Fee,
That He may be kindly and unto us spare
Of His seaweed some store,
Of His fish more and more,
And of wrecks and of all things cast up on the shore . .

Roll on, thou Red Wheel!
    Blaze amain, thou fierce Fire!
    Assuage Shonè's Ire!
Appease Mighty Bel!
    That They grant our desire,
That all may be well,
    That Their Yoke may be light
Let the Red Wheel
Revolving reel
    Through the long night!

Then from each height, each peak, on all the hills
Rose up high leaping flames that heavenward soared . .
Herenius left us, and with haste climbed there
Where the dead sentry's headless body lay . . .
Soon from the summit burst forth smoke and flame
As o'er our heads there roared the great Bel-Fire . . .
" Else had we Cormac's Stewards here to find
What was amiss," he muttered when he came
Down from the height . . . He laughed, " I gave yon
    Pict
A fiery chariot that he might seek
The Elder Gods . . . He burns well " . . . My flesh
    quaked
To hear him speak thus wildly; his fierce eyes
Seemed to me glaring in a strange mad way

As though some savage instinct stirred his breast
That he himself knew not was harboured there . . .
Now my hair rose upon my head to hear
The howling din that brake out everywhere . . .
Booming of horns and clash of cymbals mixt
With horrid yells and screams, as through the mist
And wavering shadows crimson flames rose high
From many ledges and high places where
We saw young fir-trees' slender heads upreared . . .
Now on their bending stems we saw transfixed
The struggling forms of those unhappy ones
Who died thus horribly, and underneath
Each tree was heaped up crackling burning furze
With straw and brushwood which soon blazed on high.
Thus countless captives had been doomed to die
Nailed or impaled upon the Beltane trees.
O'er the hill sides the frenzied torch-bearers
Ran with bright flaring brands to drive away,
Or so they thought, the devils of the air,
Of storm and pestilence . . . Those would they scare
That thus the fields should fertile be this year;
For so they vainly think, and these poor souls
Must suffer for their sakes . . . A Sin-Offering . . .
Said Maximus, and in his voice a dread
I had not thought to hear, " What of my friend?

Dost think that he is one? '' Petronius said,
" Not so . . . He is reserved with others who
Will die at dawn . . . Not yet are the old fires
Extinguished . . . And not yet the fatal hour
When march the Druids in their solemn state . . .
But it draws near . . . Meanwhile the lesser folk,
The common criminals, die thus, my Lord.
There are a number of them thus reserved
Throughout the year . . . Some have done nothing ill
But are unlucky captives caught in war . . .
Others come, so 'tis said, of their own will
To do hard penance or make sacrifice
For their vows' sakes . . . To win great store of good
For their own souls, or for their kindred's cause;
Thus, at a price, some give themselves to death '' . . .
Said Theodosius, " Such devotion sure
Is very rare . . . Most men love well their lives,
Petronius, howe'er wretched '' . . . Said he, " Lord,
I know it well . . . Yet there are always men
Born unto folly '' . . . Then spake Maximus,
" I will go closer yet . . . Petronius, thou
Shew me the way . . . Ye others, softly come;
Quintus, behind me '' . . . The next moment we
Crept through the bracken close upon the heels
Of the late galley-slave, and crawled along

On hands and knees through the high-branching ferns
Till nigh unto the hill's foot we were come,
Yet still were thirty feet above the plain;
Then from the bluff's edge we peered cautiously . . .

Now, as we crouched there, the dread sound we heard
Of a great war-horn booming . . . When it ceased
A sudden silence reigned . . . The fires went out,
Extinguished all at once . . . No shout was heard,
No movement was there on the plain or hills,
The dying victims' groans and shrieks were stilled . . .
" They are all dead, their throats cut, or else speared,"
Herenius said . . . Now spake the Prefect, " Go,
Herenius, with winged feet nor stay for aught!
Bid Andragathius ride here by such ways
As thou and the Pict know, down this steep hill,
Keeping 'neath cover, and so take his stand;
Detach his turmae, set in ambush meet . . .
Thou, Theodosius, with Heraclius go,
And thou, Gerontius . . . Each man to his place
To take command . . . Have ye your horsemen all
Ready to charge pell-mell upon the plain,
Cutting these devils down on either hand,
When ye shall hear my bugle give the word,
But not before . . . So bid ye every man

To make for yon Stone Circle . . . that as yet
We cannot see . . . But it lies near the Loch,
Proreta, doth it not? . . . Where we now see
The misty outline of a mighty Mound
Loom up from out the shadows . . . Go, my friends!
And luck attend ye . . . It is our last chance . . .
Thy hand, Theodosius, till we meet again . . .
Herenius, bring my horse . . . And hark thee, Sir,
Guide thou the Tribune Theodosius here
As near as may be . . . 'Tis a vantage point
From which to charge, if the land level lies
From just below here to the Standing-Stones,
As, if mine eyes deceive me not, it does? "
Herenius nodded, " Thou art right, my Lord,
I'll do my best to bring the Tribune back
By easier ways than those by which we came.
This Pict tells me he knows them every one
And will disclose them very faithfully . . .
For his own sake I told him it were wise . . .
Most noble Prefect, doubt not we'll be here
Before the sun-rise . . . Trust me, there is time " . . .

Then were we left alone . . . The Prefect, I,
And Niger . . . Said my Lord, " Petronius, come!
We will go nearer yet . . . Give me that cloak

The Pictish sentry wore '' . . . He took the plaid
And wrapped it round his shoulders and his head . . .
'' Quintus, crouch low . . . Thy cape about thee, lad . . .
Now follow me, but, for thy life, speak not! ''
We crept yet farther down the o'erhanging cliff
Till in a furze-brake we stayed quite concealed
And peered from there upon that awful scene,
Which even now comes back to me in dreams . . .

Below us stretched a winding heathy vale
That narrowed, as it drew towards the Loch,
Till it had dwindled to a neck of land
From which loomed through the mist grey-headed
Stones . . .
As it were the ghosts of old men long time dead
Who sat in Council shaping future wars[6A] . . .
On either side they were wrapped close in fog,
From whence we heard soft lapping as of waves
To right and left; and just before us shone
The glint of water . . . Clearly now we saw
In the white light of morning on each hand
The dark woods lying; on the upper hills
The black firs crowded in close ranks, and high
Beyond them pines; but on the plain beneath

[6] Cf. J. Macpherson, *Ossian*, Cent. Ed. (*Cath-Loda*) p. 14.

Vast oak-woods, dense and thorn-beset, stretched out
Their encircling arms towards the heath
As though they would embrace it . . . But the moor
Pierced boldly through their tangled thickets on
Towards the hidden, mist-enshrouded Loch,
Rising as it drew near. Where the woods shrank
At Roag's edge, King Cormac's Castle stood
Upon the southern arm of the great Loch . . .
That Dun raised on a mount that Marius saw,
Beneath which he was prisoned . . . All around
We noticed many a cone-shaped grassy mound
That like to bee-skeps shewed on the green heath.
These were the brochs where dwelt the Pictish folk . . .
Homes of the trows[7] and dwarves they now are called . .
Nearer to us, much nearer than I liked . . .
A bare half-mile away or rather less . . .
We saw the Standing Stones on rising ground,
About one hundred feet above the Loch
As near as I could gauge . . . Great, gaunt, and grey,
Of rough-hewn gneiss, or some such rock, they seemed,
Their whole appearance like unto a cross . . .
And this the manner of them . . . Farthest off,
A single row of monstrous upright Stones,
Five of them, may be more, in majesty

[7] **trolls or hill-elves.** MacRitchie, *Test. of Tradition*, p. 56.

Upreared grim heads, unpolished and moss-grown,
So old were they . . . Beyond these to the North,
Just in a line with our new lurking-place,
Stood a wide circle of yet larger Stones . . .
I call it circle, yet to tell ye sooth
'Twas more an oval . . . And these Stones were capped
From one to other by flat massive slabs.
Unto the East and West wide stretched two arms,
That I remember numbered each four Stones;
While to the North quite close to us there ranged
Vast ponderous pillars ranked in double lines,
An avenue of menhirs of great height,
Twelve feet or more they looked, between which lay
A road nigh thirty feet[8] in width that led
From the Great Circle unto lesser Rings . . .
I think I counted four . . . and thence passed o'er
The narrow Loch-Head by a one-arched bridge
Of stone constructed very cunningly . . .
And this wide causeway passed below the cliff
No longer straight, but as a snake that winds
In monstrous coils it writhed across the moor
Into an oak-wood lying on our right.
Now this long road was paved in curious wise
With flagstones great and wide that were inscribed,

[8] actually twenty-seven feet wide.

As we saw later, with fantastic signs . . .
Circles and whorls and crescents, with the shapes
Of birds and beasts and flowers all intertwined . . .
Which had some mystic meaning known to none
Save those initiated . . . So we heard . . .
Looking towards the Circle I saw stand
Right in its centre a gigantic Stone
Nigh twenty feet in height, six feet in breadth,
As we learnt afterwards . . . And at its base,[9]
Some little way removed, a sloping Stone
Was placed of oblong shape; between the two
What seemed an altar, square in form, was set . . .
These central Stones still in deep shadow lay,
Nor could we see them clearly, nor discern
If priests or victims yet had ta'en their place . . .
But all the space without the Standing Stones,
Along the Avenue from the hill's foot,
Was crammed with a great crowd of Picts and Gaels . .
A mingled concourse, men and women too . . .
Some in their many-coloured chequered plaids
And kilted garments clad, and others clothed
In saffron-tinted shirts with leathern belts
Close-girded . . . All these folk had well-laced shoes
Of tough deer-hide . . The women wore white plaids,

[9] Not there now.

Decked out with flaring stripes . . black, blue, or red . .
That reached down to their heels; and on their breasts
Gleamed polished buckles that looked broad as plates
Of silver and of brass with stones inset . . .
Upon their heads were kerchiefs white that hung
Taper-wise down their backs . . . Their glossy hair,
Some dark, some fair, dangling about their cheeks,
Fell o'er their breasts and there was caught and tied
With knots of ribbands . . . Comely was that sight,
For lovely are the women of the Gael . . .
With them mixt dwarfish Picts . . These folk had come
To celebrate the dawning of the Spring . . .
They bare green boughs of hawthorn in their hands,
And every one gay garlands wore upon
Their flowing locks . . . Wreaths of the fairest flowers
The lasses carried, and their laughter rose,
Mingled with merry chatter, to our ears . . .
The lads green rushes bare and juniper
Fresh plucked, which they swung here and there . . .
And some grasped torches still that late had flared
But now were cold and dead. Now all these pressed,
And pushed, and stared with stupid goggle eyes
And gaping mouths at the strange spectacle
That they with wonder, we with horror, watched,
As o'er the peaks behind rose up the Dawn.

Now were the hill-tops gleaming with pale gold[10]
That every moment deepened . . . All the sky
Was dappled o'er with primrose, and the mist
Rose from the sleeping Earth and softly stole
Unto the uppermost regions of the air,
And as it slowly rose gan take fresh hues
From the gold light that crept up in the East
Above the hills . . . I marvelled as I saw
Purple and scarlet, crimson, red and gold,
A hundred hues as of an opal shew
Upon the upper fringes of the mist
Which brake away until the Heavens were filled
With Peris' wings, whose pinions, softly curved,
Were spread abroad against a purple field
Of massive clouds banked high above the sea
The fluctuating melting mist dissolved
Into frayed threads and variable haze
From which were formed anew in flaky waves
A moving multitude of wandering clouds . . .
That floating in the deep aerial blue
Went dancing on their way to meet the Dawn
In glorious raiment clad . . . With milky-white
Some fringed appeared, some purple and some red . . .
And others, closer to the unseen sun,

[10] Cf. Ruskin, *Mod. Painters*, I. Pt. II. sect. III.; and V. Part VII.

Shewed under-vests of orange edged with gold . . .
Others, as yet far off, merged their grey hue
In the cold blue of the night sky that still
Shrouded the distant sea. Whenas began
This delicate transparency of light
To flood the wakening sky, then the first rays
Of the strong sun like golden arrows shot
Athwart the silver channels of the mist,
Piercing its shining veil, so that in foam
And spray the little clouds dispersed
And drifted on . . . Each moment spears of light
Darted and swooped across the topmost peaks . . .
Where yet a few pale stars were seen, they now
Did one by one in fear make haste to hide
Their trembling heads till all had disappeared . . .
The wreathed and frothing surges of the sky
Now vanished too, in flying fragments whirled . . .
The soft grey morning mist, that still close hung
Shrouding the hills, began to break away;
The ridges of the dark-blue hills withdrew
Their grey and purple shadows from the plain . . .
The fir-tops rose as if from out a flood
Of steaming vapour like a foam-flecked sea;
And now the sturdy oaks pushed up their heads,
Thrusting their curly branches all abroad,

Bronze-tipped and rosy, wet with morning dew . . .
A little cloud,[11] most like a ghost, which twined
Its waving tendrils round a clump of pines,
Seemed half reluctant to withdraw the veil
It had wreathed round them. Bound by some strong spell
It lingered still and played about the trees,
Fading a little, then grown clear again,
As with a snowy cloak it closely wrapped
The dark-green pine-heads; but their golden boles
Had now caught fire and reddened in the rays
Of the oncoming sun . . . Now Day drew near . . .
Now o'er the hills behind us brake the Dawn.
The rain-clouds o'er the sea began to melt
Softly into a mist of palest blue . . .
The lesser clouds, that peris' wings appeared,
Grew softly hazy, bathed in glorious light,
Until they seemed like the fine silken locks
Of the Dawn-maidens . . . Some of amber rare
And some pure gold, some violet of hue,
Or tender rose-colour against deep blue . . .
They spread abroad their pinions and their plumes,
Their tiny swathes and tresses widely streamed
Athwart the blue that turned to opal green,

[11] Cf. Ruskin, *Mod. Painters*, V. p. 106.

From green to primrose, saffron, orange, gold,
Crimson and scarlet, that no mortal eye
Might in the end endure . . . Such majesty
And wondrous might shews the great God of Day
When he his golden horses drives in pride
Across the mountains, up, and out to sea . . .
Now the whole sky seemed throbbing with suspense,
With purple flushes touched, as o'er its depths
Of sapphire blue there floated rosy lights,
And gleams of fire, and golden radiances . . .
Until at length all these were merged in one
Great glory of a light unspeakable,
As o'er the hill-crests soared the risen sun.
Thus brake the Dawn o'er sky and land and sea,
The glorious Herald of triumphant Day . . .
Nor might we, watching, though our hearts were filled
With gloomy sorrow and misgivings drear,
Forbear to marvel, and to praise the Lord
That He in loving grace chose to afford
Such miracle of beauty unto men.

ADVENTURE XIV.

How Maximus made his Preparations—How he and his friends heard unseen the wild Song of the Druidesses of the Amnian Isle and saw their Dance—The March of the Druids bearing the Mistletoe Bough—The May Queen and her Band—The May Song—How Quintus was too inquisitive and thereby had a closer view of the Doings of the Druids than he liked—How he fell into the hands of King Fincomarke and what happened to him thereafter.[1]

Now on the soft refreshing breeze was borne
The distant sound of wanton music wild . . .
In fitful starts it brake upon our ears . . .
Said then Petronius, " Now shall ye see come
The Druidesses of the Amnian Isle
And Sena's lofty sea-engirdled rock[1A] . . .
Those that ye saw but late within the wood . . .
They have come hither as their custom is
To join in the great Feast of the Beltane . . .

[1] For Celtic Religion and Druids, cf. Dion Chrysostom, *Orat.* 49, Lucan, Lucian, Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*; Plutarch, Strabo, etc.; and Bertrand, *Religion des Gaulois*, E. Davies, *Myth. of Brit. Druids*, Elton, *Orig. Eng. Hist.*, 2nd ed., Frazer, *Golden Bough*, Martin, *Desc. West. Islands*, O'Curry, *Manners Anc. Irish*, Pennant, *Tours in Scotland*, Rhys, *Arthurian Legend*, *Celtic Folk-lore*, and *Hibbert Lectures*, 2nd ed., Toland, *Druids*, J. Williams (ab Ithel), *Barddas*, etc.

[1A] Elton, 2nd ed., 23-24; Martin, *Hist. France*, I. 63, P. Mela III. 6.

But not in solemn or decorous wise
Will they now choose appear. Frenzied they run,
Like to those Maenads who on Thracian Hills
Go ivy-crowned; or, as Bacchantes mad
With fumes of wine, in savage mood they march,
That even strong men fly at their approach
Lest they should perish like Agavè's son,
The meddling Pentheus; by his mother's hands
Horribly slain, in hundred pieces torn
By her fierce Corybantès, who had dared
Pry on their mysteries; urged to his fate
By wrathful Dionysius, God of Wine . . .
Watch ye and listen! Not yet is the time
Ye may do otherwise . . . Meanwhile I go
To bear word to Count Maurice that ye come . . .
Nay, stay me not, my Lord . . . I am resolved . . .
My life is forfeited . . . What matters then
How I shall lose it . . . I have in my mind
A plan to save thy friend . . . There is just time '' . . .
He slipped away, and in the brake was lost
Ere Maximus could stop him.

Now we saw,
From out the oak-wood fringing the wide plain,
A maddened throng of frenzied women rush
Across the moor beneath us . . . As they ran

They cut themselves with knives of bronze till all
Their faces and their limbs shewed blood-besmeared . . .
Nigh naked went they, their dishevelled locks
Loose floating on the breeze . . . Their brows were
crowned
With wreaths of ivy[2] and of juniper . . .
Across their shoulders, o'er their panting breasts,
Black bear-skins some had flung in careless wise;
Others wore skins of foxes or of wolves;
And in her clenched right hand each Priestess bare
A thyrsus made of wych-elm or of oak
Entwined with hawthorn . . . After this mad throng
I saw the little maid walk all in white
Arrayed, and on her breasts and slender limbs
Fair gold and silver ornaments displayed . . .
Her head was wreathed with may-blossom and flowers
Of Spring . . . Lilac and Golden-Rain that shed
Adown her glossy locks their scented showers . . .
Sweet violets and yellow primroses . . .
Wild hyacinths that drooped their dainty heads
To greet their Queen, and lilies of the vale
Whose spotless white well matched her purity.
Sea-blue forget-me-nots in her dark hair
Like azure stars were clustered; nestling near

[2] E. Davies, *Brit. Druids*, p. 576.

Were golden, bronze, and purple pansies twined . . .
O'er her white shoulders gleaming daffodils
With jonquils woven shone like cloth o' gold . . .
And in her hand a Sceptre, as a Queen,
Of apple-bough she bare . . . A pretty thing,
With rose-red pearl-white fragrant blossom decked . . .
Holding her hand an older maiden walked . . .
A graceful girl in rosy silken robe,
Who wore blue periwinkles in her hair,
With burnet-roses' scented creamy buds
Woven into a crown of bristling leaves . . .
A Crown of Thorns, masked though it were by flowers . .
And in their train paced twelve young maidens dressed
In apple-green and gold; as many youths,
In bright attire of silk, all garlanded
With fragrant blossoms, dancing merrily
To lively measures, as on scrannel[2A] pipes
And silver flutes they played . . . Their tambourines
The maidens jingling shook, loud cymbals clashed . . .
But all was harmony, no discord yet
Marred the sweet concert of their dance and song . . .
All the young maids went smiling, gay of cheer,
And as they danced they sang in merry wise,
Their clear fresh voices blending tunefully.

[2A] reed-pipes.

The laughing boys took the young maidens' hands,
The Druid Novices and Ovates sang,
In deeper voices making melody . . .
This was the Song in which they praised the Spring,
And hailed the Summer that should soon come in . . .

May-Day fair beyond compare;[3]
Splendid is thy colour rare!
The blackbird sings his richest lay
When black Night dies, pierced by the spears of Day.

The dusty-coloured cuckoo calls,
Loud welcoming lovely Summer, glorious Queen.
Gone is bad weather, the bitter bad weather,
The boughs of the wood are a thicket of green.

The witch Summer maketh small brook and stream and waterfall;
The horses' fleet herd seek the cool of the pool;
The heather's long hair is outspread to the air;
Soft and white wild cotton blows; pink and white buds the wild rose.

Startled by fear beats the heart of the deer,
Swiftly the smooth sea flows,
Soft breezes sweep o'er the ocean asleep,
The Earth decked in blossom goes . . .

[3] **May Song.** Cf. K. Meyer, *Four Songs*, and *Macgnimartha Finn* (Eriu, I. pt. 2).

The little bees toil; with their puny strength
They bear goodly spoil from the bloom reaped at length . . .
Up the hill come the kine dripping mud from the rill . .
From honey that the bees oft spill the busy ants do eat their fill.

The harp of the forest plays through the trees,
Though the sail scarce flaps in the gentle breeze . . .
There is perfect peace . . .
Soft shades of colour tint every hill,
On the loch's deep waters the haze lies still; troubles cease . . .

Yet the corncrake, that strenuous bard, is calling . . .
From on high the pure water swift-falling is singing
A welcome to the sun-streaked pool . . .
The talk of the whispering rushes is heard . . Summer has come . . . The harebells are ringing . . .

Light swallows fly; swoop, wheel, dart high . . .
The echoing hill with melody rings,
The soft rich mast in the woodland springs,
The stuttering, quaking marsh is waking . . .

The peat-bog glossy shines as raven's coat,
The cuckoo's swelling throat shouts a gay welcome, merry his loud note,
The speckled salmon leaps the foaming force[4] . . .

[4] waterfall.

On their swift course how light doth bound the agile
hunter and his hound!

The young man runs rejoicing in his youth . . . Sweet
song
The budding maiden sings in her fair beauty strong . . .
Perfect each tree, each herb of the greenwood,
Perfect each stately hill, each sun-flecked vale, each
laughing rill and stream.

O lovely and delightsome Summer, thou
Shewest thy splendour now rough Winter's fled.
The fruitful woods their pure white blossoms shed to
carpet Earth . . .
In joyous Summer's peace all grief and tears shall
cease . . . Welcome Mirth!

The finches stay their flight . . . Ye may see the flocks
alight
In the midst of the water-meadows to take their dear
delight . . .
The green field and its grasses are rustling and swaying
As amongst them the brawling white river goes
straying.

The lads are thronging with wild mad longing to race
their steeds;
Down in the meads the ranked hosts range;
See! Yon strange shaft of light o'er wold and lea
shoots bright,

Shining, it sweeps the mere; the water-flags appear
gilded with streaks of gold.

And hark! The tiny, timid yet persistent lark is singing somewhere near . . .
His sweet clear voice is ringing with tidings of good cheer . . . Now to the skies he flies
Lost in the sunshine bright . . . O joyous note that fills with such triumphant thrills
This radiant-tinted, sweetest-scented May-morn with delight!

Dancing they came . . . But now with sudden spring
And backward rush, with whooping and with yells
The wild Bacchantès whirling circled them,
Waving aloft their arms, their unbound hair
Floating about them like Medusa's locks,
So tangled was it . . . Fierce the maddened song
That burst from their distorted frothing lips . . .

Has the Wind but one Course, the Sea but one Wave,[5]
The Fire but one Spark?
No, no, from out the dark,
From many an unknown source, from many a hidden cave,

[5] Cf. T. Stephens, *Literature of the Cymry*, p. 194; *Preiddeu Annwyn*, *stanza* 8, *lines* 3-4.

See rise,
Ruddy blazing to the shuddering skies,
A myriad quivering tongues of flaming fire,
Keen as Desire,
Fierce as Bel's Ire!

The mountainous waves,
From deepest ocean caves,
In tumult outpouring leap gushing and welling . . .
Hark! How the savage wind, rushing and yelling
Lest it be left behind,
Shrieks through the vales!
Moaning it wails
Ere it dies away and is gone.

Who may our footsteps stay,
When like these,
The countless children of Fire, Sea and Breeze,
In fury we sweep on our way?
When on us shall suddenly seize
The Frenzy of Hu . . Of Hu, the Mighty One?
None! None!
Naught may avail!
Away! Away!
Rise we and run!

O Sisters! Race! Like hounds on the trail and the trace
Of the panting deer

We bring Fear . . .
A terrible, haunting, horrible, nameless Fear!
We bring Dread . . .
For the Earth doth tremble when we assemble,
And quaketh beneath our tread!

Black terror shall appal
The inmost hearts of those
Who are our hated foes,
Until they faint and fall,
Prostrate all!
Then with one voice
Chant we the praise of Hu, our mighty King!
Evoë! Let us sing, and in His strength rejoice!

Sisters, come!
There's work to be done . . . Let none here fail . . .
Let none be so frail
That her heart quail!
If any falter, naught may alter
Great Kerridwen's stern decree . . .
She who stumbles, she who tumbles,
Surely she shall slaughtered be!
Courage, Sisters! What fear we?
We are strong . . . We are lithe . . .
Naught doth us ail . . .
Our hearts are blithe as we throng,
In haste along . . .

Not a few . . .
But many crushing, screaming, rushing,
To the call of the God, to the summons of Hu!

Come along! Come along!
Evoë sing we! Joyful be our song!
Rouse! ye dreamers, from your sleeping!
Mourners! Rise and quit your weeping!
Mothers, come! In others' keeping
Leave your babes . . . Ye wives, obey!
Leave your husbands, leave your brothers,
Fathers, sons, and all the others . . .
Maidens! Leave your merry play!
Leave your dear ones, leave your lovers!
Shame, thrice shame on laggards creeping!
O'er the meads run we swift leaping . . .

As we race, quick of pace,
On us doth shine a light divine . . .
It is the Moon that brightly gleams . . .
Like purest silver are the beams
Of the Goddess of the Moon . . .
When She sets . . . Soon, Sisters, soon!
As o'er the hill-tops shyly peeping,
Creeps blushing Dawn in light arr. y',
Our panting bodies we'll be steeping
In the sunshine . . . Golden wine
Of the God, the Lord of Day . . .

Haste we! Haste we to the reaping
Of His Vintage. Hark! Who's calling?
On our listening ears is falling
Hu the Mighty's thunderous Voice?
Rejoice! Rejoice!
Sisters! Obey
The summons of that God, in whom we own
The Presence of great Bel . . . Not He alone . . .
For Bel and Hu are one . . .
God of the Sun!
God of the Vine! To whom we Maenads pray . . .
The Golden God! The mighty Lord of Day!

With a shout,
Our noisy rout
Through the wood, in maddened mood,
Roaming goes . . .
Let our foes
Beware!
Let all have a care!
Let no rash man, with cunning plan,
Think he can spy on Maenads unaware!
For, if he dare,
He dies!

See! See! Where yonder flies
Some impious wretch! Run, Sisters, run!
Your swift limbs stretch, and hither fetch
That luckless, foolish one!

Heed not his cries!
He dies, he dies!
Come, drag him by the hair!
Rend limb from limb, and tear
His body piecemeal . . . So!
Go, vile intruder, go!
To moan thy fate below,
And mid the Shades lament
Thy life misspent!
Fling we to Earth his bones . . .
Heed not his groans . . .
His soul flits through the air
We know not where, nor care,
As we twirl and madly whirl
In a ring;
And joining hands Evoë loudly sing
Unto great Hu, our glorious Lord and King!

Louder, louder, let us raise
Our triumphant Hymn of Praise
Unto Kerridwen, lovely Queen of Night,
Who from the clouds shines forth . . O wondrous sight!
O Goddess bright!
Hail! Hail! All Hail! Great Queen! Thy silvery light
Shall cheer us on our way . . .

As we go out with all our merry rout
To greet the Golden Day,

Who shall our footsteps stay?
None may! None may!
Haste ye! Haste ye! Maenads all!
Maddened, answer the God's call!
While your clashing cymbals ring,
Evoë, still Evoë, shall ye sing!
Evoë chanting, onward run . . .

Let every one
A flaming pine-torch in her hand now bear[5A]
As beacon, and her tangled wealth of hair
Cast on the wanton breeze . . .
Let now fierce frenzy seize
The Daughters of the Moon!
Soon, soon,
E'en as ye dancing tread the fragrant Earth,
Shouting in wild and unrestrainèd mirth,
Shall come the Dawn, the radiant, rosy Dawn
Of that fair morn,
The glorious First of May!
Evoë, sing!
Hail! Our King!
We greet Thee, Bel! O Bel the Mighty, see!
Before Thee now the Hosts of Darkness bow,
And vanquished flee . . .
Hail! Hail! Victorious God! The Golden Lord of Day!

[5A] Cf. Euripides, *Bacchanals.*

Now each of these strong Maenads bare with ease[6]
A burden deftly on her shoulder poised . . .
Thatch must they bring to roof their Temple o'er,
That but last night their own hands had despoiled . . .
So, wildly dancing, they swept o'er the moor
To where their Temple stood, of oak-trunks made,
Planted in a great circle closely ranged,
That lay between us and the Standing Stones.
Each Priestess, in her turn, from out the ring
Of that mad dancing, chanting Sisterhood,
Must singly go unto the Temple's Porch
To lay the thatch she carried in its place . . .
Now, as we watched, we saw a Druidess,
Young, lithe, and graceful as a tiger's cub,
Go leaping, bounding, rushing o'er the heath . . .
But suddenly in her wild frantic course,
Stumbling she staggered, tripping reeled, that so
Her arms flew wide, her loosened burden fell . . .
She, shrieking, clutched in vain . . . The empty air
She grasped, and shrieked again in deadly fright . . .
She stopped, she stooped . . . Now would recover it . . .
Her groping fingers gripped the load too late . . .
For, ere she could rise up, on her rushed down
Her savage sisters yelling in their rage . . .

[6] Strabo, IV. 198; Dionys. Perieg. 570.

With horrid laughter and fierce frenzied howls
They flung themselves upon her . . . Then we heard
A scurry as of wolves that seize and rend
One of the pack that maimed falls by the way . . .
A snarling worry and right piteous screams . . .
Naught could we see but struggling, twisting forms
In the death-grapple twined, as with loud yells
They tore their late companion limb from limb,
And tossed the mangled fragments to and fro
From hand to hand . . . Such is their awful Law,
And this their Devil's Rite . . . With horror seized
I hid my face between my trembling hands . . .
I heard the Prefect breathing hard, naught else,
Save a quick muttered oath between his teeth . . .
The noise of their mad revelry grew less . . .
Shudd'ring I looked and saw that they had passed,
And with them the May Queen with all her train,
Unto Kerridwen's Temple. There some seemed
Busily thatching it, while others whirling danced
About its walls still waving the torn limbs
Of that unhappy one . . . The little Queen
Sat on a throne of hazel-boughs high reared
Hard by the entrance to the Standing-Stones,
And now new chorus raised her youthful train;
Softly they sang, and faint yet clear were borne

Their wistful voices to our listening ears . . .

Come, ye lads and lasses, sing
Round your May-Queen . . . Hail as King
Him who shall be found among ye
Fit to shew forth splendid Spring!

What though if at noon they die?
Now 'tis dawn, the sun not high . . .
What though perish that ye cherish
In the sacred Beltane Fire?

They die there that everywhere
Ye shall obtain your hearts' desire . . .
The Sun-God claims his Toll . . .
Pray ye for each victim's soul,

That their courage may not fail,
That they go with cheerful hearts,
Bravely playing out their parts,
Then applaud them, nor bewail . . .

You rich harvests soon will reap . . . Why then weep?
Laugh and play while ye may,
Merry and gay, Spring with Summer meets to-day,
Hail, all Hail the First of May!

The little Queen bowed low her brow at last,

Hiding her face she wept, until there came
A Druidess who made her raise her head,
And, as I thought, did harshly threaten her.
I touched the Prefect's arm . . . " My Lord . . . That
child . . .
The little maid . . . Canst thou not save her, Sir? "
Choking I spake and felt my cheeks were wet,
Yet I was not so much afraid as wroth . . .
Said Maximus, half to himself, "Alas!
Why come my soldiers not? . . . Dear God! Must I
See that poor maid and then my best friend die?
I'll not outlive Count Maurice . . . I will go
And ransom him with mine own body first . . .
Cormac may spare him thus . . . Hold hard! What's
that?
Quintus! The Druids come, but not my men . . .
O God in Heaven! They will come too late! "

From the dark wood below us we heard rise
A solemn chanting that in volume swelled
Until it filled the vale and rolling poured
In deep-toned harmony across the moor . . .
Between the mighty oak-trees' mossy boles
We saw the gleam of brightly coloured robes,
As from the shadow of the wood there came

The Druids and the Chieftains of the Gael.

First marched the Ovates in long tunics dressed . . .
The sacrificial robes of sacred green . . .
By golden cords each led a milk-white steer;
And next the Bards in their due order came,
Bearing small harps, in azure raiment clothed
Like to the sky at noon, who sang the praise
Of ancient Gods, but above all their theme,
As afterwards I learnt, was of that One
They name the Mighty Essence, whom they claim
To be the Spirit that pervades the Earth . . .
Akin to Pan, yet also like to Jove . . .
This was their Song as they their harp-strings touched
Lightly, and their deep voices rose and fell . . .

Now hail we[6A]
The God, the God of Victory!
The Cromm Cruaich, the Ancient Lord and Wise!
When He doth rise, His Enemies shall flee.

Now we sing
To Thee, O Hu the Mighty! King
And Lord of Land and Sea, who gives renown . . .
We dread thy frown . . . Fair gifts to thee we bring!

[6A] For metre, cf. *Voyage of Bran* (*Appendix B.*, pp. 301-305).

And we praise
Great Bel, the Lord of Shining Rays!
We bring thee Sacrifice, O Glorious Bel the Bright!
Grant us thy light, and give us length of days!

We honour ye
The One in Many . . . One, though ye seem Three . . .
And we invoke the life-giving free Air,
The Earth so fair, and the far-stretching Sea!

Yea! We invoke thee, Alba's Land![7]
Girdled by silver sea and golden sand . . .
Yea! We invoke all things that prosper thee . . .

The shining, gleaming Sea!
The fish that therein be,
The fertile, fruitful Hills,
Wherefrom spring hundred rills,
Where drinks the deer . . .

The pleasant wooded Vales,
And grass-grown, flower-strewn Dales
Where feeds the steer . . .

The marshy Rands and Meads,
O'ergrown with waving weeds
Where browse the Kine . . .

[7] Cf. Stephens, *Lit. of Kymry*, p. 51 (*Howel's Delight*).

The rugged barren Lands,
Beneath whose Rocks men find
What the Gods left behind
From out their plenteous store . . .
Perchance a copper-mine,
Or, maybe, golden ore . . .

From out the mountains flow
Into the plains below
The Rivers abundant, abundant in water . . . The Wells
Crystal clear are gushing and Waterfalls rushing . . .
O Lakes and Meres! O Heaths and Moors and Fells!
Each wave and sod and stone its story tells!

Yea! We invoke thee, Alba's Land!
May never foe step on thy strand!

Where thou liest 'neath High Heaven,
There Heaven descends to Earth . . .
Peace mounts from thee to Heaven,
Peace reigns and Joy and Mirth!

Thus chanted they, and made the valleys ring
And all the hills resound with their deep song.
Next walked a Herald clothed in white attire . . .
Each side his head a white wing drooping fell;
And in his hand a vervain branch he held
Encircled by two living snakes that coiled

Twisting and twining, writhing round this staff.
Followed three Druids in their speckled robes
Of black and white, who carried sacred things . . .
The Sacrificial Bread, a Crystal Vase
With water filled, no doubt, from Holy Well;
The third, as Usher, bare a peeled white Wand
Of Hazel in his hand . . . Behind these strode
The tall Arch-Druid in his flowing robes
Of spotless white. His pointed cone-shaped cap
Displayed a golden tuft of the bright broom,
Round his broad brow was twined an oak-leaf wreath,
His girdle wide was made of beaten gold
Whereon were carved full many secret runes,
And inset shone right curious blood-red stones . . .
From this broad belt hung down the golden knife,
Shaped like a sickle, that the Druids use
To cut the sacred mystic Mistletoe . . .
His sweeping beard nigh hid the golden bands
That hung suspended from his gold-ringed throat.
Marvelling I noted how on his broad breast
The jewelled Fylfot[8] glittered; in his hand
A golden Sceptre gleamed . . . Behind him, led
By two young Ovates, stepped his stately horse,
A fine grey steed, with scarlet trappings decked,

[8] Fylfot = Swastika. Cf. Fairholt, *Terms in Art.*

Which, curvetting, oft arched its slender neck.
Behind, in solemn state, there creaking rolled
A six-wheeled wain by twelve white oxen drawn,
Led by twelve Druids in fine rich-dyed robes
Of gold brocade and scarlet . . . Round their necks
Were golden collars, and on their bare arms
Bracelets of gold they wore, but on their heads
Oak chaplets, else bare-headed went . . . Behind
A multitude of chanting Druids walked
In many coloured robes that shewed their rank;
Amongst them novices in saffron vests,
And parti-coloured tunics, gay of hue,
Striped with broad bands of green and white and blue;
Bare-legged and armed, nor aught upon their heads
Save willow-wreaths, who walked with downcast eyes
And folded arms . . . Humbly they bore themselves,
And with due cause, else sharp their punishment . . .

Now on the Wain lay a white linen cloth
Whereon was set the Bough of Mistletoe . . .
The Golden Bough of Might, the Herb of Awe,
That the Arch-Druid had himself just culled
With fitting rites, with sacrifice and prayer,
From the great Sacred Oak-Tree in the wood . . .
About it and around the Wain were set
Nine golden bowls that held fresh smoking hearts;

In other dishes blood that yet hot steamed . . .
I shuddered as I looked, but Maximus
Quick whispered in mine ear, " No, no, my boy . . .
It is not what thou thinkest . . . Naught lies there
But tokens of the stallions and the steers
That they have offered up unto the Sun . . .
The greater Sacrifice is yet to come . . .
Pray God we may forestall those cruel rites!
Pluck up thy spirits, Quintus! Hearst thou not
Some movement in the brushwood? Soon will come
My horsemen hither . . . Soon the trumpets peal
Of our brave cohorts that are marching on . . .
We can do naught as yet . . . Lie still, good lad!
Move not! Speak not! Lest yon curst devils hear . . .
If Andragathius fail me not, there's time . . .
Just time, no more . . . O God! Why comes he not? "
He murmured to himself, his face grown white
With the tense strain of waiting; but his eyes
Were bold and keen, naught in them of despair,
And I took comfort as I met his gaze.

I turned to watch the slowly rolling wain
That creaking on its axles passed below . . .
I thought upon the many marvellous things
That Mela told me of the mistletoe[10] . . .

[10] Cf. Folkard, *Plant-Lore*, Friend, *Flower-Lore*, and Frazer, *Golden Bough.*

How this strange plant they gather twice a year . . .
Once in the Winter Solstice, once in Spring . . .
With sacrifice and ceremony brought
They use it in a multitude of ways . . .
This is the herb the Druids call All-Heal:
Naught is its nature poisonous nor malign,
But virtue wondrous and medicinal
Has it to cure hot fevers, and such ills
As falling sickness, palsy, or green wounds.
If gathered from an oak or apple-tree,
But, in especial, oak, it has such power
That he who wears it when he hunting goes
Shall thus ensure good sport and limbs unharmed . . .
And lovers' hearts it will together bind . . .
If by some chance they meet beneath its leaves
And, smiling on each other, fondly kiss,
Without a doubt sweet bliss, long joy, they'll find . . .
Such the compelling might of its strong charm.
The Druids, knowing all its virtues well,
Distil a liquid from this wondrous plant,
Which, amongst other uses, serves as spell
To vanquish sorcerers' and witches' spite.
A branch of mistletoe, borne in the hand,
Enables him who holds it to see ghosts;
All disembodied spirits own its sway . . .

Bid them to speak, they dare not disobey . . .
Elves, bogles, goblins, phantoms of the night,
Come charm-compelled their secrets to disclose . . .
The Frisians call this herb the Spectres' Wand,
But Esifena by the Greeks 'tis named,
And Luperax by the Chaldaeans wise;
We Romans know it best as the Oak-glue,
Because it holdeth well all that it seals . . .
Yet it hath power to open fast-closed locks,
So potent is it . . . Nor should any dare
To gather mistletoe with careless haste;
On such a curse will fall without a doubt . . .
Now, I have heard from certain monks a tale
That, spite its magic charm, on this plant lies
A heavy doom . . . Once was it no mean herb
But a fair forest-tree of noble size
That grew in Syria near Jerusalem.
From its strong trunk the Roman soldiers took
The wood, 'tis said, from which they made the Cross . . .
The Tree of Shame . . . on which the Lord of Heaven
Hung suffering sore that we might be forgiven.
Then was the mistletoe henceforth accursed,
Condemned to dwell as a mean parasite,
A puny herb dependent for its life
On other trees, to which it closely clings,

Without whose help it miserably dies . . .
Yet such the virtue of our Blessed Lord,
So great His grace and loving charity,
The mistletoe, that once did thus support
His sacred Body, from that holy Touch
Still shews some trace of glory and displays
A healing power that never shall grow less
To comfort those in sickness or distress . . .
Oh! Many nations do revere this herb;
E'en the wild Northmen hold it in great awe,
And swear it slew their God, the Lord of Day . . .
I looked on it with wonder . . . Ne'er before
Had I set eyes thereon . . .
Now, as I watched,
I heard again the Druids' solemn Hymn
Fill all the air. I listened to the strain,
Crouching near Maximus, as thus they sang:

Lord of all, O Sun-God! Hear us,
In whose rays is Light Divine . . .
Though Thy names be many, marvellous,
Thou art One! Give Light and shine!

To this end we will adore Thee,
Mercy craving; and implore Thee . . .
By the Sacrifice we offer

Give us victory, and the best
Of Earth's fruitful store . . . Then rest . . .
Rest from labour, rest from trouble.
See! Our offerings we double,
Ever bringing more and more.

In the West now sinks dull night;
In the East the God gins rise . . .
See! Where shines His glorious Light!
Come, ye people! Lift your eyes!
Mark the Druids' Sacrifice.
Hark! The blare
Of Horns i' the air
Bids ye prepare!

March, ye Druids! Ready all
At your High Priest's solemn call,
To fulfil
The God's Will!
Lo! The Beltane Day is dawning!
Soon shall all men see the warning
When Bel's fires light every hill . . .
Peace! Ye people . . . Peace! Be still!

March, ye Druids! Hail, all hail
The God of Light! Great Bel draws near!
Ye victims, wail! Crouch down in fear!
That hour draws nigh when ye must die . . .
Though your crimes ye should repent

Think not that we may relent . . .
Justice demands your sacrifice . . .
The God commands! That doth suffice . . .
Your prayers, your bewailing, are all unavailing . .

For ye must die
That we may live; that Earth's gifts shall not cease;
That o'er demons fierce prevailing,
Who shall fly, their grim heads vailing,[11]
We may rest in peace . . .
Forth must ye go!
And every bitter throe,
Each pang, each pain ye feel,
Shall be our gain. Our weal
Your woe!

Yet, for your comfort, know
That ye may pardon win
When ye have purged your sin . . .
Ye shall by steel and fire
Assuage Bel's ire . . .
Then may ye at the last new life acquire
And rise again . . .
In Death your gain
Won by sharp pain . . .
So let your sorrowing souls to that far goal aspire!

Meanwhile with solemn song and chant we go

[11] Vail = to bow in token of submission.

To greet the God, the glorious Lord of Day,
Who treads beneath His feet black Night, His deadly
foe . . .
In triumph rides He, till Earth owns His sway . . .
Rejoice! Rejoice! Ye worshippers of Baal!
O Golden God of Day! Hail! Hail! All Hail!

With terror clutching at my heart I marked
The Wain roll by, and heard the people shout
Below us on the road . . . I looked that way
And saw without the Avenue of Stones
A group of guarded men who were brought forth,
It seemed, from out the bowels of the earth;
And one by one they issued from the ground
Until about a hundred men stood there
With hands fast bound behind them. Fain was I
To see them closely . . . Heedlessly I crawled
Unto the very verge of the steep cliff,
So stared down at them . . . Plainly I could see
Count Maurice set apart from all the rest
In a white tunic broidered o'er with gold,
Scarlet, and purple . . . Rich indeed his dress . . .
A warrior's golden torque about his neck,
Gold rings upon his arms, but bare his feet,
Though on his red-gold hair an oak-leaf wreath

Was set . . . I could not see his face . . . I crept
Yet closer to the edge, but as I leant,
Guarding my head against the whin-bushes,
With unexpected sudden horrid crack
The earth beneath me crumbled and gave way . . .
Backwards I flung myself, but forward slid,
Clutching at shrubs and tufts . . . A moment stayed
My rapid downward rush, then on I fell,
Sliding apace, to catch a bush at last,
So hung suspended, just too far below
For my good Lord to reach mine arm . . . He tried,
And would have climbed down to me, but I feared
Lest those beneath should see . . . Instinctively
I loosed the bugle from my shoulder-belt,
And with my left hand tossed it up to him . . .
I saw his face, half angry, half perturbed,
Gazing in anxious wise . . . He caught the cord . . .
Something he would have said, but naught I heard . . .
I saw his face no more, for now I fell . . .
The quick jerk dragged the broom-bush that I gripped
Up by its roots . . . My right hand grasped it still
As I dropped t'wards the plain . . . Tumbling, I rolled
Heels up, head first, then right side up again,
Still clutching wildly at each passing shrub,
Which did in some sort serve to break my fall,

Until I reached the bottom . . . Nor was killed,
Nor brake a bone, saved as by miracle;
But dizzy, sick, nigh stunned; with bleeding hands,
And face besmirched and scratched by thorny briars . . .
Breathless, and cursing my stupidity,
My thoughtless folly, I swift rolling came
From out the brushwood down on to the plain
Right in the pathway of the Gaelic Lords
Who rode in festal garb behind the Wain . . .
Their horses plunged and reared . . Shouts dimly came
To my dull ears . . . Hands gripped me fast and raised
My helpless shaking limbs. When my dazed eyes
Opened at last I found I stood between
Two stalwart Celts, and on me the keen gaze
Of many Chieftains of the Picts and Gaels . . .
Quoth he who nearest sat his chafing steed,
Reining it in with easy practised hand,
" By all the Gods! A gift from out the clouds! " . . .
A young man in gold armour richly chased,
With open helm that shewed a handsome face,
With yellow curling hair and full red lips,
Was this same Celtic Chieftain. Bent his brow;
Somewhat impatient and impetuous he
Seemed in his manner as he looked on me . . .
With a quick laugh, then frowning, he exclaimed,

" Now who art thou? Bel's envoy, or an elf
Sprung from the Gods know where . . . By Cromm!
A spy!
A spy! The Roman dress he wears . . . Their cavalry
Go thus equipped . . . Speak out! Who art thou, boy?"
I heard the ominous word passed down the ranks . . .
" A spy?—A Roman spy!—To Cormac Finn
Bring him at once—King Eugen! Hold him fast!—
Nay! Kill the wretch! What does a stranger here?
He doth profane our Holy Mysteries!—
Tear out his eyes!—Torment him till he dies!—
Give him to us . . . Let's pull him limb from limb "—
" Nay! Hand him over to the tender care
Of the fair Priestesses of Sena's Isle,"
Said a cool mocking voice that I marked well . . .
'Twas Conan Meriadoc . . . as I knew
By his great golden helm that plain displayed
The Ermine couchant, Token of his House[11A] . . .
Disdainful, scornful his sharp piercing eyes . . .
I shivered as I caught that sneering glance,
I guessed his thoughts . . . He thought me safer dead
Lest I should tell too much . . . No pity he
Had ever for a blunderer . . . I felt
Fierce hands that gripped and tore . . . But the two
Celts,

[11A] Cf. Toussaint de Saint Luc, *Hist. de Conan Meriadoc* (1664), pp. 14-15.

Henchmen of Eugen, held me tight until
Their Lord should speak. A young man backed his horse
Against the foremost of the yelling mob
That thronged about me, eager for my blood . . .
He roared in Gaelic, using words I knew,
" Leave him alone! Stand back, ye cursèd fools!
Why press ye thus your betters? Room! Give room!
Eugen, what is thy will concerning him?
'Tis but a lad . . . Give him a chance to speak " . . .
Said the young King, " Go we to Cormac Finn;
The Ard-Righ must decide and question him . . .
Hi! Achay,[12] sling the youngster o'er thy horse,
Across thy saddle-bow . . . So . . . Ride on, friends . . .
This noisy shouting is unseemly here,
The Druids like not such irreverence " . .
Thrown like a sack of meal across the horse
Face downwards lay I and knew little more,
Save that Ethodius held me with firm hand,
Until we halted suddenly, and then
The young Prince lifted me from off his steed
And held me by the arm . . . I stood unbound,
But helpless as a child . . . Before me rose
The mighty Stones the Celts Callanish call.

[12] Achay = Eochaidh or Ethodius, brother of Eugen.

We stood within the Northern Avenue,
Though still some distance from the Ring of Dread . . .
I was alone amidst mine enemies . . .
And there before me, high on his black horse,
Sat the old monster of whom late I heard
Such gruesome tale from Marius. I shrank
Within myself; I know my face turned pale
As I looked at him scared. He smiled on me,
Till I felt sick at heart. Such baleful eyes
Surely no mortal ever had before . . .
They seemed to burn and pierce me through and through . . .
" Where are the rest of ye? " said he, and stared
Straight in my frightened face . . . I fear I quailed . . .
Though mild his voice, all softly as he spake,
I felt his cruel eyes would bore the truth
From out my shaking lips . . . But then I thought
Upon my Prefect's peril, and I thought
On Theodosius and his heart-felt scorn
If I should fail . . . I saw my father's face,
My mother's loving eyes . . . Boldly I lied . . .
My fainting spirit angrily I roused
For very shame's sake . . . Brief, I think, the pause
Ere I replied in mine own British tongue
That the old Pictish King had likewise used,

" Lord King, I crave protection . . . I have come
From wandering far all night and many days . . .
Six nights have passed since I leapt overboard
From a war-galley of the Roman swine . . .
'Twas sailing southwards out from Stornoway . . .
They made me serve as Liticen, but I
Am an East-Briton come of high-born race . . .
When they would beat me I sprang overboard
And won to shore . . . I can swim well, my Lord . . .
Then, hearing that thou heldst the Beltane Feast,
I sought thee, noble King . . . I missed my way
And fell . . . That is my tale . . . Thy grace I beg,
I am thy suppliant . . . Receive me, Lord ! "
The old King laughed . . . I shivered in my boots,
So grating was that sound . . . "A well-spun yarn !
A Roman galley cruising off our coasts . . .
From Stornoway, say'st thou ? . . . A week ago,
And I knew naught ! I, who have many spies
And other means of vision . . . Never mind,
It matters little . . . I had hoped to learn
That which I wanted from thee clearly told
Without delay . . . Think'st thou I am deceived ?
Why dost thou lie thus stupidly to me ? . . .
Yet here is mystery . . . Some magic spell
Doth blind mine eyes . . . I, who know everything,

Now see not clearly, but I sense some ill . . .
My flesh doth creep, my hair doth bristling stand
Erect upon my scalp . . . My finger-tips,
Pricking, shew me a foe doth lie in wait . . .
Perchance draws near . . . But I will break his will . . .
Short is the time before the Sacrifice,
Yet it shall serve . . . Four of ye take this fool
And stake him carefully . . . Then work on him
Till he shall tell the truth . . . When he hath told,
Let Shonè have what ye do leave of him
But less his scalp and skin . . . These shall ye hang
Within my Hall amongst the other pelts.
Take him some distance lest unseemly noise
Should now disturb our Feast . . Haste ye, my sons! ''
I flung myself quick gasping at his feet . . .
Ethodius let me go . . . Scared in good truth
Was I, but my numbed brain had formed a plan,
Urged by necessity . . . Vain it might be,
Desperate enough . . . E'en as they dragged me up . . .
Those cruel brutes who did King Cormac's will
Upon his luckless victims . . . I shrieked out,
'' Lord! Lord! In mercy hear! I'll speak the truth . . .
I told thee lies before . . . I feared thy wrath . . .
I did leap overboard, but we were wrecked . . .
Just in the harbour's mouth . . . The rocks . . . Thick
fog . . .

Oh! All our ships went crashing . . . Sank . . . Aye! all
Our galleys crowded with good steeds and men . . .
I see them yet . . . I hear them shrieking call
As by great waves o'erwhelmed they hapless drowned . .
Three triremes that sailed North to seek this isle . . .
To rescue Maurice . . . I confess it, Lord . . .
All, all have perished . . . None but I alone
Am left to tell the tale . . . Thine enemy,
The Prefect Maximus, and his best men
Lie drowned off Luirbost Loch since yestere'en . . .
Thou needst not fear the Romans any more . . .
Now slay me how thou wilt . . . I've told thee sooth " . . .
I met the King's sharp evil eyes, then bowed
My head . . . In truth I was afraid . . . He smiled,
"Aye, is it so indeed, my son? . . . Come, come,
Thou speakest sense at last . . . So all are dead?
The valiant Maximus, so wily too . . .
His colleague Theodosius, is he gone?
Thou noddest, boy . . . Yet had I thought his star
At least read otherwise . . . 'Tis passing strange . . .
Beneath the sea the Roman soldiers lie . . .
It may be so . . . Ho! Colla Uais, draw nigh!
Take now thy kinsmen, twelve of the young men,
Thy nephews Kerball, Bernan, Artrac too . . .
Achay thy son and Rochadh . . . They shall go

With fifty tribesmen of the Clan Cholla . . .
Hunt ye the hills around, the coverts draw,
Visit the Gockmen[13] who the beacons watch,
So make report; if need be, sound th' alarm!"
He turned to where I horror-stricken stood . . .
"Drowned, wrecked in fog off Leog, sayest thou?
That would account for the thick mist I feel
And cannot pierce . . . Thou shalt be honoured, boy,
Beyond thine utmost dreams! . . . Arch-Druid, say!
Didst thou not lack a May-King yesterday?
Hast thou yet found one?" In harsh growling tones
The Priest made answer, as his deep-set eyes,
O'erhung by heavy eyebrows hoar with age,
Rolled on me searchingly, "O King! The boy
I chose is a poor weakling, yet our best . . .
I doubt he'll die of fright, nor stand the test.
This lad would better serve, an he were clean . . .
He is a well-made boy and trim his limbs . . .
He would do credit to our May-pole, Sire . . .
Give him to me, that we may purify
And cleanse him first, then for the Sacrifice
We'll clothe him fitly even as a King . . .
But let there be no tarrying, for see!
The sun mounts high" . . . King Eugen boldly cried,

[13] Watchmen.

" What wouldst thou do, O Marven? Mine the lad!
If the High King does not exert his right
To slay him as a spy . . . Yes . . . I protest!
I have first claim if Cormac looses him . . .
I want a slave-boy who is like this lad,
Well-bred, well-trained . . . My Queen hath asked for one,
I promised her the next I caught . . . He's mine
If Cormac spare his life . . . That is Clan-law . . .
I captured him . . . Ha! Achay, hold him fast!
Niall of Munster, Brian, Fearghus . . . All
Ye Irish Princes, and ye Alban Chiefs
And Scottish Lords . . . O Children of the Gael,
I ask of ye . . . I ask not of the Picts . . .
The Cruithni have their laws that are not ours . . .
Have I not right on my side? Draw back, Priest!
Was it for this Cairbre Riada came
And founded Dalriad, callèd by his name?
'Tis well my Forefather sleeps in his Cairn
When I, his heir, to such extremes have come
That I must suffer insult, and be dumb
Forsooth, because a Druid choose to steal!
O Ard-Righ, speak! Wouldst see thy grandson[13A] wronged? "

[13A] i.e. Great-grandson.

The old King looked at him with gloomy eyes . . .
With skinny hand upheld he slowly spake,
" Hold, Kinsman! Wouldst thou hardily usurp
My place as Over-King? . . . Crow'st thou so loud?
'Twere better thou hadst stayed in exile drear
On Manaw's Isle[14] in poverty and shame . . .
Wouldst thou return there, Boy? . . . Beware, cross not
My spoken will . . . Take care! . . . Nay, nay, my son,
I have decided . . . Am I not High-King?
I have condemned this stranger . . . He must die . . .
But for his youth's sake and his pretty face
He shall go honoured to the Lord of Day,
Not punished as a spy or criminal . . .
He shall with the young maid, the Queen of May,
Pass through the Beltane Fires . . . Peace, peace! No more . . .
Would'st brave my wrath? Another word and thou
Shalt go to Shonè in a coracle
With neither oars nor rudder, food nor drink,
Though thou'rt my daughter's grandson; " Fierce his gaze,
Till young King Eugen paled and turned away;
Ethodius muttered 'neath his breath as he
Looked on my troubled face, then loosed mine arm
And joined his brother . . . They stood sullenly,

[14] I. of Man.

Their eyes downcast . . . Said then the Pictish King,
Red Heirgust, mocking, " Lord, now that all know
The Law and Eugen knows his place, wilt thou
That we proceed or not with the May-Feast?
Already doth the risen Sun approach,
Bel's arrows strike the Circle's outer fringe,
Why do we loiter chattering? We waste time " . . .
Quoth Fincomarke, and now his blazing eyes
Shewed wrath indeed, " How now, thou saucy one!
Who thinkest thyself great . . . Dar'st thou presume
To counsel me who am thine Over-King,
Ard-Righ of Alba? Silence, peevish boy!
Or thine own back shall feel the sharp Ridge-Stone,
For I will send thee envoy unto Bel
When comes the Summer Solstice, say'st thou more! . . .
O Marven! Thou who art Arch-Druid, know!
We wait thy guidance . . . Shall the Feast proceed?
Thou art the Mouthpiece of the Holy Gods;
Here therefore art supreme and we Kings naught . . .
Not even I, the Ard-Righ, will now dare
To bid the Feast proceed without thy leave."
Said the Arch-Druid, " King, thou sayest well . . .
Let now the Feast begin . . . I give the word!
March on, ye Ovates, Bards and Druids! Pass
Towards the Standing Stones in Belin's Name!
Prepare now humbly, O ye mighty Kings,

Ye noble Lords, to follow in our train!
Come, all ye people who around us throng,
Each in his lawful rank and order, march! . . .
Luchtren and Urgnith, lead this fated youth
Unto the Field of the One Door . . . Bathe him
Without delay in the pure Holy Well
That he be cleansed from earthly stain and soil . . .
Robe him in white and let him garlands wear . . .
Crown him with oak-leaves . . . Do ye all with speed;
Then set him by the side of the May-Queen
Upon the Pyre of Hazel-boughs that he
May reign awhile . . . See that ye honour him
Who in the Image of the God appears
And in that semblance glorifies Bel's Name " . . .

Swiftly those Ovates did that they were told
With care and reverence . . . All too soon I sat . . .
My soldier's tunic torn from off my back . . .
Fresh from mine enforced plunge in the cold Well,
With chattering teeth and shivering shaking limbs,
In shining raiment dressed, a puppet King;
And by my side the little maid, my Queen . . .
I looked at her and saw tears fill her eyes . . .
I felt inclined to weep myself . . . I sighed,
And gently touched her listless trembling hand;
She let me hold it as I softly spake,

" Poor little maid, how luckless is thy fate!
But keep thy courage still . . . Who knows that God
May not yet save us? " She slow shook her head,
Her hand within mine quivered as she said,
Raising her tear-dimmed frightened eyes to mine,
" Who knows the will of God? I thought Him good,
I thought Him loving . . . Now am I adread . . .
Thy voice sounds kind . . Dost think it will hurt much?
I have tried to be brave . . . The Sisters say
That I shall feel naught, see naught, but the God,
The glowing Sun, who takes me for his bride . . .
But I am Christian born . . . My brother says
These Gods are devils . . . Sucat, Sucat! Come
To save thy sister! " Frightened, she crouched down
Against my breast . . . Astonished, I quick said,
" What? Art thou daughter of Calpurnius then,
That thou of Sucat speakst who is his son,
Out of Alclwyd late gone to Brittany,
Thence reft by pirates? I have news for thee . . .
Thy brother captive lies in Erin's Isle,
But thy two sisters are as yet both safe;
They serve King Eugen's newly-wedded Queen
On Alclwyd's Castle-rock that tops the clouds " . . .
Whispering, I told her everything I knew
About their fate as we sat hand in hand
And waited what should come.

ADVENTURE XV.

How Quintus, being made King of the May, heard the Arch-Druid's Invocation to the Gods and saw the Procession of the Princes of the Gael—Of the Stone-Circle and what he saw therein—How Liamain, Sucat's sister, told him many things concerning the Beltane Feast and its Ceremonies, and how the Prisoners were brought forth for Sacrifice.

The High Priest spake :

" Within this Sacred Ring in solemn state
I bid ye come . . . O Chieftains of the Gael !
Lords of the Picts ! Approach in humble guise !
Rein in your horses, ride with bowed-down heads,
Arms crossed upon your breasts, lest the Gods frown . . .
Lest Bel shoot arrows down, lest Grannos blast
The vile blasphemers, and in flaming fire
The dread Cromm Cruaich manifest his ire ![1]
Ye Bards ! Strike now your harps ! Let tuneful chords
Arise and fill the air with melody . . .
Ye Druids ! Raise the solemn Hymn of Praise . . .
The Chant of Sacrifice . . . The Holy Song !
Let the Ovates the victims lead within
Who by their deaths shall purge all stain of sin
From us this Beltane Day . . . Ye People ! Hear !

[1] Elton, 271-272, *Revue Celtique* I. 260.

The time draws near . . . The fated Hour is nigh,
When those predestined must submit to die!

Sing, Brethren, sing! Praise we the Glorious Ones![1a]
Greet Hu the Mighty, whom we Belin name,
And also Lugh, Who wields the wondrous Chain . . .
Lugh Lamhfada, Long-handed, Far-shooter . . .
The God of Light and Day, of Fire and Flame!
Bright-gleaming Grannos, His fair youthful Son,
Whom some call Mabon, He who heals the World . . .
Toutatès pitiless, whom we revere
As Camulus, the raging God of War . . .
King of the People, Thiudareiks Thy name,
Thou who dost marshal to the fight the Clans . . .
Taranis is Thy Consort . . . She who leads[2]
Our warriors in battle . . . Not less stern[3]
Her awful rites, nor less appalling are
Her smoking Altars, than those famed afar
In Scythian Lands where great Diana reigns . . .
Hail to thee also, God of the rich Earth!
Hesus, Who bloody Sacrifices asks
That Thou mayst grant us ever fertile fields . . .

[1a] Elton, 244-245, E. Davies, *Brit. Druids*, 115 *seq.*; Rhys, *Hibbert Lectures*, 2nd ed. For Hu and other Deities, see Index.

[2] Rhys, *H. L.*, 2nd ed., 70-73.

[3] Cf. Lucan, *Pharsalia* I. 455.

Sirona, Hail! Thou Goddess grey and old,
Whom we call Modron, Mabon's mighty Dam,
To whom this Temple once was dedicate
In Ages past, when Thy Star brightly shone
Along its Avenue . . . We fell from grace . . .
We did neglect our fathers' Ancient Rites . . .
Alas! The Gods are often angry now . . .
The Star of our great Circle long hath been
Removèd from its path . . . Still it shines forth
But not for us, nor will it now align
As in old days with the Great Stone of Cromm . . .
Yet maybe if we offer Sacrifice
With Prayer and Song, with solemn mystic Dance,
The Goat-Star[3A] once again shall give us Light . . .
Amalthea come! Thou Nourisher of Gods!
The Horn of Plenty to us be restored . . .
Wrapped in Thy Goat-skin, come, Sirona, come!
And with Thee all the Gods! We honour pay
Where it is due . . . O! All ye people, kneel!
Worship Sirona! Yet not Her alone . . .
Kerridwen, too, hymn we . . . Thou Huntress pale

[3A] *Capella.* Cf. Mackenzie, *Bk. of Lews*, pp. 215-217; Boyle Somerville, Jnl. Anthrop. Instit. XLIII. (1912). For connection of Sirona with Athene and the Goat, see Frazer, *Golden Bough* (*abr. ed.*), p. 477; Rhys, *Hibbert Lectures*, 2nd ed., pp. 27, 28. For Athene as a Mother Goddess, cf. Smith's *Gk. & Roman Myth.* I.

Who rides the clouds . . . Our Lady of the Moon!
Danu, the fruitful Mother . . . Rosmerta!
By Gauls across the sea art Thou revered,
Who altars raise that Thou grant luck in war . . .
And the Five Battle-furies . . . Vengeful Fea[4]
Nemon the Venomous, Badb[5] merciless,
Macha the Savage and that grey-haired Queen,
The Morrigu, the Great One with Two Spears,
Who shrieking flies to guide the strife of men,
Pointing their weapons, as her flight She steers
Amidst their flashing swords to claim Her toll . . .
Her acorn-crop, that is the heads of foes . . .
With which we feed Her birds, the hoodie-crows,
On whose wings She is borne, and yelling goes,
Delighting in the slaughter . . . Then arise[6]
The wild, impetuous, mad, precipitate,
Inexorable, furious, lacerating, dark,
Merciless, combative, contentious ones . . .
The Battle-Furies! . . . Screaming, fluttering . . .
There also soar the Satyrs and the Sprites;
The Wizards of the Vales, the Witches vile;
The Goblins of the Hills, Owls, Bats and Fiends;
Destroying Demons of the Earth and Air;

[4] pronounced *Fee*. [5] pron. Bāve.

[6] Cf. Hennessey, *Rev. Celtique*, I. 39.

And Water-Kelpies, Nixies of the Streams,
The Devils of the Deep, the Phantom Host . . .
'Tis They incite to Battle and provoke
The lust of strife . . . 'Tis They who shall sustain
The valour of the warriors . . . To Them, Hail!
We worship Boänn, Brigit, Angus fair;
Mider; and Ogma Cermait, honey-mouthed,
Strong Giver of wise Speech, These we revere . . .
The Lords of Light, the Ladies of the Air,
The Dwellers in the Realm of Faerie-land . . .
Nor fail we to adore with reverence fit,
With humble hearts, Those whom we scarce dare
name . . .
Save in a whisper and with 'bated breath . . .
Fierce Bödb[7] the Red, Black Net, Ri, Corb and Beth,
And dark Cernunnos, whose grim bearded face
Shews high upon His brow the branching horns
As of a mountain stag or giant elk,
Crowned each with golden torques . . Mysterious God!
To Whom Etrurian Priests in Tuscany
Upon Thine Altars the young she-goats slay . . .
As Vedijovis Thou art known in Rome,[7A]
But by the Brythons of this Isle art praised

[7] pronounced Bōve.

[7A] Cf. Frazer, *G. Bough* (*Abr. ed.*), p. 392, and Smith's *Dict. Class. Myth.* under *Veio-jovis.*

As Hu the Mighty, God of Golden Wine.
In Thy Black Goat-Skin on the Thracian Hills
Thy worshippers revere Thee by the Name
Of Dionysus and in Alban Vales
They hail Thee Bacchus! Bacchus ever young!
But Thou to us art very old and wise . . .
The Father of our Nation, close akin
To Kronos and Dis Pater . . . Thou dost shew
In Thy Three Faces, wondrously combined,[7B]
That Thou Cernunnos art, and Hu, and Bel . . .
The Sons of Time . . . To Thee the Crested Bull,
The Antlered Stag, the Ram, the Goat, and all
Such Creatures as have Horns, by right belong . . .
For Thee Sirona's Star Capella shines . . .
This Temple Thou dost share with Mabon's Dam . . .
She is the Mother of the Lord of Day,
But in the Nether-World Thou holdest sway,
Who squattest, cross-legged, guarding the great wealth
That in Earth's caverns Thou hast garnered long . . .
O Generous One! Profusion Thou dost pour
Of acorns and of beech-mast from Thy store
For cattle; and Thy gold, Thy hidden gems,
Thy precious stones, Thy minerals, Thine ore,

[7B] Cf. Bertrand, *Réligion des Gaulois*, Ch. XXII. (*Le Dieu Cornu*), Rhys, *H. L. (2nd ed.)*, pp. 93-94.

For men who toiling seek within Thy breast . . .
If they shall honour Thee and tribute pay
With fitting rites as we shall do to-day . . .
Hear us, Wind-listening God! Who hearest all
The sounds of Earth with thy sharp-pointed ears . . .
The grass that grows in fields, wool on sheeps' backs,
The opening leaves, the breathing of the flowers . . .
All dost Thou hear . . . Then hearken to our Prayer,
And we will play soft music on reed-pipes . . .
Æolian harps shall lend their harmonies
To soothe Thy slumbers lest, Cernunnos, Thou
Shouldst rise in wrath and shake the trembling Earth . .
Thou who art hailed as the first son of Time,[8]
Upholder of all Worlds, the Mate of Don,
The Mother Goddess . . . Ye! the Elder Gods!
Who dwell in darkness hidden 'neath the Earth,
Though from your shadowy Land springs Light and Life,
We fear Ye, worship Ye with awe and dread,
Ye Ancient Ones who judge and rule the dead!

Oh! Many Gods are there in Earth below,
In Heaven above, on Land, in the deep Sea . . .
All places have their honoured Deity . . .

[8] Rhys, H. L. (2nd ed.), p. 87.

But chief of all in these lone Western Isles
We worship Cenn Cruaich, Head of the Mound,
Lord of all Life and Son of the High Heaven,
Who of Thy bounty makes the crops abound . . .
For Thou art Kronos, in whom mortals live
And have their being . . . Hail! Great God of Time!
The Immortal Hour . . . Past, Present and To-come!
In Thee we worship all the Gods . . . The Sun,
The Moon, Earth, Air, and Water . . Thou art these . .
And the Infernal Ones we trembling name . . .
Domnu, the deep Abyss . . . Those 'neath the Sea,
The gloomy Fomors, Offspring of the Night,
Whose King is Balor of the Evil Eye . . .
And Elathan the Golden, gleaming Bress,
With Gwyn, the son of Nudd, whom Bel did place
To rule in Dis and Annwn o'er the fiends,[9]
Lest they break forth and slay the human race . . .
These are Thy Children . . These like Thee, Divine . .
But Thou art greatest, Who dost all contain
Within Thyself . . . Bright does Thy Glory shine
O Cenn Cruaich . . . Thee, Thee we now adore!
To Thee we kneel, in Thee we ask the grace
Of all the Gods . . . Be gracious to our Race!
Our humble Prayer, our solemn Sacrifice,

[9] Cf. *Mabinogion.*

We give Thee as thy due . . . Let these suffice
When Thou as Bel doth rise and shew Thy face . . .
Let now the Feast proceed! . . . The Hour draws nigh
When those who fated are must bleed and die."

Chanting, the Druids marched around the Ring,
And in their right hands torches bare on high
As yet unkindled. After them rode forth
The old Ard-Righ on his great sable horse,
Before him borne the banner of his House
That was the Standard of the Alban Kings . . .
A flaming, flying dragon with ram's head
On a black field . . . Behind in ordered ranks,
Each with his banner borne before his face,
There rode the Princes of the Picts and Gael;
And many warriors on long-tailed steeds[10]
With gaily-coloured trappings rode in pride;
Lances they carried and wore shirts of mail
With crested helmets, and long ox-hide boots
That reached unto their hips . . . Upon their heels
Were silver spurs. Behind them marched a band
Of Foot-soldiers, in close-fitting ringed mail . . .
Each man was girt with studded metal belt,

[10] Cf. *Gundestrup Vase*; Bertrand, *La Religion des Gaulois*, p. 368, Plate XXX.

Had hide boots to his knees, enforced with brass . . .
Or some such metal . . . On his head a cap
Of burnished steel; and each with a long spear
Was fitly armed; each bare an oblong shield
More than five feet in length, made of hard wood,
Hide-covered and strong-banded with bright bronze . . .
A boss of gold or brass, set round with studs
Like glittering stars, adorned each warrior's shield.
Their Captain, helmed and crested, marched . . . His
sword,
Bared in his hand, on his right shoulder braced;
And his broad belt was with red gold enlaced . . .
He wore no kilt but went tight cased in mail . . .
Behind him, raising a right hideous din,
Nine Hornblowers slow strode with puffed-out cheeks,
Blowing most lustily on monstrous horns
Well-nigh six feet in length, with gaping heads
Like prick-eared dragons. These they held upright
In both hands firmly grasped . . . The curving mouths
Inserted in their lips . . . A most strange sight . . .
Nor have I ever heard more horrid noise
Than from those giant elk-horns blatant blared.

I stared down at the Ring . . . Marvelling I saw
How round that Circle in their ranks were ranged

Four times three monstrous Idols hewn from stone,
With plates of brass adorned that shining shewed
Like splendid armour . . . Grim and stern their mien,
Greater their stature than the sons of men . . .
Each on a lofty pedestal was placed
Of polished marble black as ebony . . .
These were, I thought, the Gods and Goddesses
Of whom the Druids chanted . . . In their midst,
Before the central shaft of rough-hewn stone,
There sat a Shape of Horror, high upreared
On a great throne of blood-red porphyry.
To bitterly beguile the Gaelic folk,[11]
On whom this Demon has brought foul disgrace,
With gold and silver was it plated o'er
That glittering shone. Black was its frightful face,
Of polished marble, so it seemed to me;
Its eyes huge rubies were that circling rolled
Within their sockets with a cruel stare . . .
In wicked malice winking now and then.
Its lips of coral red, in horrid grin
Parted, displayed sharp teeth made of white pearl.
Its curling locks were twisted from spun gold,
Its features were not coarse, but fierce and stern . . .

[11] Cf. Nutt (A) *Voyage of Bran, Appendix B.* (*Poem of the Cromm Cruaich*).

Its horror lay in the grim fearfulness
Of its dread smile, its strange and savage glare . . .
Stooping it sat, upon its head a crown
Of scarlet lacquer inlaid with fine gold,
Whence drooped fantastic brilliant crimson wings
Folded about its pointed goat-like ears . . .
'Tis from these flaming lurid-coloured wings
This Idol has its name among the Celts,
Who call it Cenn Cruaich, or Bloody Head;
Though some say this doth mean Head of the Mound,
And others call it Cromm Cruaich because
It ever forward bends . . . Which is the truth
As I can testify . . . I saw it thus,
Stooping, with outstretched arms, that curving bent
As though to gather something in their grasp,
But they were empty yet . . . Its keen eyes looked
Towards the earth beneath it where was scooped
A hollow place; therein a brazen bath,
Or Cauldron, wide and deep, stood, plain to see,
Sunk slightly in the ground. Its outer side
Was finely moulded with great heads in brass,
Shewing the Gods perchance . . . The inside rim
Was likewise carved with many a curious scene,
But from my seat scarcely the strange designs
Might I discern . . . Most like a monstrous pit

This Cauldron seemed, from which rose a thick steam . .
Nor might I see what hidden hellish brew
By secret hands was cooked within those depths . . .
Though its sides glowed as though they molten were
Yet not a sign I saw of any fire.

The Druids now began to dance and sing
In Mabon's Honour and to greet Great Bel;
The Bards their harp-strings smote, with wild shrill cries;
The Hornblowers their dragon-headed horns
Blew till their cheeks nigh cracked . . . Great was the din . . .
Kerridwen's Priestesses did leaping dance,
Clashing their noisy cymbals; whirling they
Joined in the maddened revels . . . Loud their song,
And ever louder, wilder, fiercer grew . . .

We worship the Cromm, the Head of the Mound!
To the Crooked Cromm Cruaich we leap and we bound . . .
We dance in a Round!
Our loud cry doth resound!
As we leap high to Cromm Cruaich,
Bent Head of the Mound!

Refrain from thine Ire!
To Thy Service we're bound . . .

Give Corn for the Byre!
Give Green Grass on the Ground!
Give us Fire! Give us Fire!
Let Thy Mercies abound!
O Crooked Cenn Cruaich! Bent Head of the Mound!

We will bring Thee fresh Blood
That Thy Head be dyed Red . . .
It shall flow in a Flood
And freely be shed . . .
Yea! We offer to Thee that Thy Heart doth desire!
Then grant to Thy Servants Thy Life-giving Fire!
Give us that we require!
Give us Fire! Give us Fire!

Let the Victims approach, with garlanded hair,
In Garments of Linen, white, spotless and fair . . .
We leap high in the air as singing we bound
To meet them and greet them . . . Let praises abound!
Ye Druids, prepare! The Victims strip bare!
As we dance in our Reel let the Doomed Ones low kneel!
Hark! Our Chant doth resound!
Let the Offering be bound
As we leap in a Round . . .

Let each Ovate and Druid in his place be found . . .
Let the Bronze Blade be ready! The Priest's Hand be steady!
Before Thee low bending we bow to the ground!
O Crooked Cromm Cruaich! Bent Head of the Mound!

O Cromm! We adore Thee! We humbly implore Thee
From Thy plenteous Store
Give us more and yet more!
But chiefly we pray, as dawns Beltane Day,
And we dance and we prance and we high-leaping bound,
O Crooked Cromm Cruaich! Grant our Hearts' Desire!
For our Hearths and our Homes give us Life-giving Fire!
Give Fire! O Cromm Cruaich!
Give Fire! Give Fire!

Upon the farther side, beyond the Stones,
Where a great mound rose up, I saw a thing
Most strange and horrible . . . A wicker cage
Of monstrous size made like unto a man
With hands wide-stretched, and in each fist a staff,
Or spear-shaft, seemed . . . A hurdled door
Stood open in its side, and Druids came
Driving before them a vast crowd of men,
Women, and children, all loud clamouring,
Their hands fast tied . . They pushed them all within,
And drave in cattle, horses, pigs and dogs,
Foxes and cats, and even cocks and hens,
Geese and such creatures . . Then piled straw and furze
Without, within, making thereof a heap

Of all things that would burn, whereon they poured
Resin and pitch, with tallow, fat and oil,
In joyful wise with songs; so set a guard,
Who locked the gate of that most horrid pen,
Then laughing stood and listened to the din . . .
Thence came such groans and plaintive muffled cries,
Mingled with grunts and squeaks and brutish noise
And lowing of the cattle, that I felt
Sheer horror crush mine overburdened heart,
And helpless pity tore me . . . Though as yet
Unto those wretched ones naught evil chanced,
I saw the wicked purpose of those fiends . . .
I sat appalled, and terror pierced my brain . . .
They meant to offer a Burnt-Sacrifice
Most terrible and dire . . . A Holocaust!

But what of us, and where was Maximus?
Where the Asturians and the Tungrian Horse?
My heart misgave me . . . I heard a low voice
Behind me speaking . . . Turning, I saw there
One I had noted not . . . 'Twas the tall girl,
The May-Queen's sister as she proved to be,
Who acted as her bridesmaid . . . She had crept
From out the circle of the frightened girls
Who ringed our lofty pyre, miscalled a throne . . .

They sang no more, but crouching sat or knelt
In trembling terror silent, and some wept . . .
The tall maid stared at me, " Thou turnest pale,
Thou who art Roman soldier, self confessed,
And well thou mayst . . Soon shalt thou taste of death . .
And my poor little one, Richilla, dies . . .
I am her elder sister, Liamain,
And I must live until next Beltane Day,
For at her death I'll Queen be of the May . . .
But first Three Sacred Feasts shall come and pass[12] . . .
The Feast of Mabon, Midsummer's fair Dawn;
Lugnassad's Fiery Noon; dark Samhain's Eve . . .
Ere my turn come to tread the Lane of Fire,
And many horrors shall I see ere then . . .
By lot were we two chosen for that end;
Such is their wicked practice . . . See'st thou there
That narrow lane by those high faggots hedged
On either side that leads towards the Stones?
That is the path that thou and she must tread
In a brief while . . . When the Need Fire doth come . . .
Then shall the Arch-Druid kindle the May-Fires,
And ye must pass between them, swift or slow;
Nor shall ye hope that ye may scatheless go,

[12] *Mabon* = the young Sun-God, i.e. Baldur, later his Feast became that of St. John. Lugnassad = Aug. 1st, Feast of Lugh, the Sun. Samhain = Nov. 1st.

So fierce those fires, so withering their blaze;
E'en if thou rushing through them didst emerge
Scorched, panting, fainting at the farther end,
The ruthless Druids wait with mocking jeers . . .
With red-hot pitchforks they will force thee back
Till thou and she shall perish in the flames . . .
Your smouldering bodies then they'll take and place
Upon this pyre, so kindle it . . . Know, too,
That if thou didst 'scape death when passing through
The flames of Bel far worse were then thy fate . . .
See'st thou yon gaudy May-Pole that high rears
Its flaunting head to Heaven, gaily decked
With ribbands and fair garland of sweet flowers
That mask its purpose, hiding its sharp point? ''
I nodded without speaking, naught I knew,
But I remembered the Arch-Druid's words . . .
That I should well become the Beltane Tree . . .
I shivered as I heard her words of dread,
" Upon that pole they'll stake thee, 'live or dead,
For thou the May-King art, and thus doth he
Perform his share of this grim Sacrifice[13] . . .
Therefore I counsel thee when thy time comes,
To take this poor child's hand and swiftly leap
Into the heart of the hot scorching flame;

[13] Cf. Frazer, *Golden Bough* (*Abr. Ed.*) 299, 303, 307-308, 313, 315.

Else must thou die thus cruelly impaled . . .
The other way is easier I have heard '' . . .
She spake so coolly that my blood grew chill . . .
I felt an horror inexpressible . . .
I turned to escape her dark and mournful eyes
And marked that in the Circle of the Stones
The Song and Dance had ceased. All now stood still,
The Druids, Kings and Nobles, ranged around,
Each in his ordered place . . . The Ovate band
Led in those victims who were doomed to die
When the Sun's rays flashed on to certain Stones
In the appointed order . . . So the maid
Whispered, and bade me watch . . . '' Then shalt thou see
How the Arch-Druid kindles the Need Fire
That all the people may have warmth again
And light unto their need . . . Now have they none . . .
No fire on any hearth, nor light in home,
Until Bel grant it by his High-Priest's hand . . .
Then shall those victims die within the Ring,
Then shall the Druids set light to the Pen
Of wickerwork . . . That awful Hecatomb . . .
Then shall ye two pass through the Fiery Lane
That Bel and Grannos may receive their own,
And Cenn Cruaich be honoured in their names . . .

Hu, too, the Mighty One, shall get his share,
The First-Fruits of the Earth . . . Then all will feast
And merry-make until the close of day " . . .
She seemed distraught, her great eyes wild with dread,
For all her calm cold voice . . . The May-Queen wept,
And clung tight to my hand . . . I looked again . . .
From where we sat high raised upon our pyre
We could see all that passed within the Ring . . .
Between each Statue, as I now discerned,
There stood fresh-planted, tall, and well-grown trees;
Pine-trees, whose leaf-stripped branches were so lopped
They looked like crosses black against the sky.
Said Liamain in her low even tones
That made my blood run chill, "See'st thou those trees?
Mark now who lie beneath " . . . I looked and saw
The prostrate bodies of those pretty boys,
The May-Queen's band, still in their finery,
Lie bound . . . " When their turn comes," said she,
" The ruthless Priests will nail them to those trees . . .
The Body-Guard will shoot at some with bows
To shew their skill, or hurl at them with spears,
Others they'll torture in fantastic ways . . .
Alas! My brother Sannan lies down there,
He who was May-King ere they captured thee.
He is too young to die thus terribly,

But what hope is there? . . . All alike are doomed " . . .
She wrung her hands, then spake in mournful tones . . .
" Ere the Sun goeth down they will bring sheep,[14]
Cattle and goats, and pigs and other beasts
That they will sacrifice . . . These will they hang
Living upon those trees, and add thereto
Birds of all kinds and garments of great price,
Silver and gold-work, all things that are rare . . .
Yea, women bring their gems and jewels fine,
Men, their good coats of mail and valued arms,
To hang them up in pious offering . . .
When evening comes and this great Feast draws near
Its Ending, then the Images they'll bring
Of all their Gods wrought in fine brass and gold,
Silver and lacquer-work . . . Each Tribe, each Clan,
Each Father of a Household has a God,
Who will be brought here for this solemn Rite;
And all these Gods they'll carry past the trees,
Chanting in chorus, winding in and out,
While round the Circle in a last wild Dance
The yelling Priests and Maenads madly whirl . . .
Then to those trees they will set light at last
And burn those wretched ones, with all that hangs
Dead or alive upon the pine-branches,

[14] Cf. Lucian, *De Dea Syria* XLIX. (*Festival of the Pyre at Heliopolis*).

So end their agony as dies the day . . .
This Rite most Celts still call Feast of the Pyre;
But, in these Western Isles, Feast of the Torch,
Because the pine-trunks burn as torches flare,
And some call this the great Feast of the Lamp[15] . . .
See'st thou where lying, tethered in a row,
Those youthful victims lie? The Maenads dance
Before their prostrate forms in frantic wise . . .
Each wears her bear-skin cloak, and on her head
A war-cap of bright brass . . . Those piercing yells
They screaming utter that their curses may
Drive off all evil spirits . . . Yet I think
In their own hearts have entered wicked fiends
That take possession of their moonstruck minds,
And make them act as devils . . Watch them whirl . .
Thou canst not help but hear their strident cries . . .
See, too, where stand behind the Central Stone
With mournful air . . . O vilest sight of all!
Those women of the Gael, those Pictish wives,[16]
With sleeping infants cradled on their breasts,
Holding young children by their little hands,
Robed all in white and garlanded with flowers.

[15] Cf. Frazer, *Golden Bough* (*New Year*) I. 97. Sacrifice of pigs by Kazans of Sarawak. Oesterley, *Ritual Dance*, p. 102.

[16] Cf. Nutt (A) *Voyage of Bran, Appendix B.* (*Poem of the Cromm Cruaich*).

At noon these mothers must not fail to make
Offering of First-Fruits to the Cromm Cruaich . . .
Four times a year when the great Feasts are held
One-third of all the issue of the Gael,
And Picts likewise, is given to this God . . .
Thou wouldst know why this awful Sacrifice
Is made? I know not, but have somewhere heard
That in return for these poor babies' lives
They ask for milk and corn . . . For victory
Over their foes, and cattle free from pest,
Themselves safe from disease . . . So tribute pay,
Asking protection in a hard cold world
From this vile Devil, whom may God destroy!
They say this custom came to Erin's Isle
Long ages since, brought by black-bearded Priests
Of the Phoenicians, who once traded there;
And thus in Dalriad are practised still
These cruel rites . . . Some Celts love not this Cult,
And fain would stop it, but they do not dare . . .
See, how the women weep, and some press close
Their babies to their breasts . . . Doth God then sleep?
Doth He nor see nor hear? Or is this Bel,
This Cromm Cruaich, this Devil of the Sun,
Greater than He? Alas! How can we tell?
This Demon makes these tribes to lose their peace . . .

He urges them to fight . . . They worship him
To their own hindrance, in their ignorance . . .
He is their God . . . That crooked Cromm . . . With mist
He blinds their eyes . . . Nor see they that they lose
The Everlasting Life . . . To him in sin
They offer up and slay the innocent,
Their piteous wretched offspring . . . With what grief,
What wailing and what peril must they go
Close to the blazing furnace in that Bowl . . .
For know, at noon that frightful Cauldron roars
With flames high leaping even to the skies . . .
Then must they come and in the Cromm's black hands
Place their dear little ones . . . O shameful deed!
Who thence slip down shrill screaming in the fire . . .
To drown which grievous and heart-rending sounds
The horns are blown, the noisy cymbals clash,
The Druids and the people loudly shout . . .
But the poor mothers, wailing to the Fiend
Who has enslaved them, shed most bitter tears,
That they in trembling fear must swift conceal
Lest they be called blasphemers by the Priests.
They beat their breasts, they clap their frenzied hands,
Then bow themselves in frightened reverence . . .
Wherefore these Plains are called, wherever found,
The Fields of Adoration or Magh Slecht,

But rather should be named the Fields of Death " . . .

Her low voice ceased . . . I turned to look again
On the three men who now must die within
The Sacred Precincts of the Standing Stones . . .
Two I knew not, but guessed that one of these
Was the young Prince of Leinster, Eochaidh named,
Who thus must expiate the murder done
Upon the person of a Druid's son . . .
They led him t'wards two sloping stones that lay
North of the Central Column, at the foot
Of the great golden Statue . . . Here was set
An Altar wrought with skill in hardest iron,
A mighty rough-hewn brazier stood there too,
And it was black and ugly; on it lay
An arm-ring of pure silver, and a bowl
Of copper chased and carved with mystic signs . . .
Naught else was there saving a bronze brazier,
Wherein as yet was not a sign of fire . . .
The nearer Stone, that lay towards the West,
Was a black rock about eight feet in length
And some five feet in breadth, with rounded back
Well polished; at one end a hollow scooped
To hold the victim's head; and there were rings
With iron chains to bind his hands and feet
If there were need . . . I could see Eochaidh's face

Looked somewhat pale and worn but naught adread . . .
High was his glance, proud was his firm-held head . .
His roving eyes swept all that Circle round
Until they rested on a red-haired youth . . .
I guessed 'twas Niall, Saxon Caren's son,
Now King of Munster . . . Close behind him stood
His Druid Bairchid in the priestly robes,
Who glared at Eochaidh very spitefully . . .
Then Eochaidh laughed . . . " Thou hast thy will,
O Priest . . .
But thou shalt see I'll make a better end
Than that poor fool, thy foppish weakling son . . .
Niall, thou dog! Would we two had been set
To fight our quarrel out . . . Then hadst thou owned,
Thy breast beneath my knee, my strangling hand
On thy white throat, who was the better man!
Thou coward, thou! Thou art priest-ridden, thou!
Who let'st the Druids settle thy disputes! "
Young Niall started, flushing fiery red . . .
His hand flew to his hilt, he forward strode,
" Thou liest, Eochaidh! " . . . Then he bit his lip . . .
" Thou art a dying man . . . Say what thou wilt . .
I tried to save thee . . . 'Twas thine own mad act
That brought thee to thy doom that I regret " . . .

But Eochaidh sneered, " My hardest unearned pain
Is sympathy from thee, thou mongrel cur!
Thou Saxon whelp! " . . . An Ovate angrily,
Roughly enough, cried, " Silence! Hold thy peace!
Dar'st thou pollute the Holy Sacrifice
By thy rude outcry? Marven, our High Priest,
Will have thy tongue torn out if thou blaspheme . . .
Save now thy breath for that thou needs must bear,
Then shall thy cries be pleasing in Bel's ear."
Eochaidh laughed loud again but spake no more.
They stripped him of his gaudy finery,
His golden armour, torque, and his rich rings,
His tunic of white silk, but left him decked
With the gay garlands of sweet scented flowers . . .
Amidst his foes, thus naked and alone
Now must he stand near to the fatal Stone,
His two hands fastened to it by a chain,
Yet not so close but that he moved with ease.
Smiling he leant against the slab and watched
With great disdain the eager staring throng;
Though once I thought I saw his shoulders twitch
As he looked t'wards the East and marked the Sun,
Whose rays had crept up steadily until
They lighted now the outer line of Stones
That formed the eastern arm of the great Cross.

E'en as I watched, said in mine ear the maid,
Richilla's sister, " When the Sun doth fire
That sloping Stone to which the Prince stands bound,
Then shall four Ovates stretch him on his back . . .
What use resist? They will hold fast his hands
And grip his feet and knees, restraining him
Till his strength fail . . . He must abide his fate . . .
Then shall the Arch-Druid carve him cunningly,
Examining with care his inmost parts,
And at the last shall cut from out his breast
His living heart, so inquisition make
As to the Future from his dying throes;
Then offer him, thus slaughtered, to the Sun . . .
But he shall die the last, not yet his time . . .
See where the other victims come . . . Alas!
The pity of it " . . . Sobbing, she broke down,
Her feigned composure fled . . . I looked and saw
Where now the Cornish Count walked to his doom.
Calm and composed came he with cheerful face
As to his wedding. Him they slowly led
Unto the Sloping Stone that lay before
The Central Shaft . . . Prince Eochaidh greeted him
With ringing laugh, " I told thee how 'twould be . . .
An there were time I'd claim my bet from thee . . .
Two shag-haired greyhounds 'gainst thy golden ring . .

Bel is too mighty for thy Christian God . . .
The Devil wins and we poor wretches pay! ''
An Ovate smote him savagely, but he,
With a fierce oath, swung round and felled the man
With the bronze chain that held him . . . Ne'er again
Would he officiate on Beltane Day
Who like a poled ox fell to the ground dead . . .
With horror came his fellows thronging round
And bare him thence lamenting . . . Six men ran
And gripped young Eochaidh fast and painfully,
But he laughed at them, mocking, " 'Twere but wise
To bind me tighter to your blasted Stone,
Lest I take further toll ere all is done . . .
Scat have I ta'en, so scatheless, woe is me,
I shall not fare from hence . . . Gently, ye dogs!
At least respect my rank and royal race . . .
If ye would have me friendly message bear
Unto the Gods, shew honour, swine, to me!
I, who to-day Bel's envoy am for ye,
Should be revered, not mauled like this . . Curst pigs!''
They forced him down upon the rounded Stone,
Holding him there tight-gripped remorselessly.
With Holy Water sprinkled they the ground,
And muttered charms against his blasphemy.

Maurice said naught, but stood still, patient, calm,
While they despoiled him of his rich attire;
Stripping his limbs, they left him garlanded,
And round his brow the oak-wreath still was twined,
Mingled with sprigs of budding mistletoe.
Upon a sloping Stone he too must lie
Flat on his back . . . A right uneasy bed,
For it was sharply ridged . . . Said then the maid,
Richilla's sister, " When the Sun doth fire
That Stone on which he lies, those four who hold
His hands and feet will break his back thereon
By raising him and dashing him hard down.
There must he lie and suffer grievous pain . . .
See'st thou what they prepare? " . . . I looked and saw
On his bare breast the Druids set with care
A basket filled with charcoal, straw and chaff,
Which they fixed there with narrow bands of steel . . .
" That will old Marven kindle in the way
That they hold sacred . . . By the Holy Wheel
Rotating east to west o'er spindles nine
Of oak-wood made. The rope that turns that wheel
Is woven from the strands of the Doom-Rope
That the King's Justice often has achieved . . .
Thou shalt see shortly . . . When the new-made Fire
Descends from Bel, as these vain priests pretend,
They will dispense the Gift, while it shall burn

Fierce, red and glowing on the throbbing breast
Of noble Maurice, Caradoc's dear son . . .
So shall he slowly die, but the bright fire
Shall once more crackle on the people's hearths
To bring them warmth and comfort, light withal . . .
Such are their hellish customs . . . Naught may save
Count Maurice nor the Prince, nor yet that third,
The Northern stranger, who must die the first . . .
E'en now they lead him forth . . . When they are slain
Then shall ye two pass through the Beltane Fire;
The Hecatomb shall blaze, while those foul fiends
Will feast all day until the Sun go down . . .
Would I were dead that I saw not these things!
Where are thy Roman soldiers, wretched boy,
That they come not? Now has the time passed by . . .
It is too late . . . See'st thou? The Northman dies!
The Sun shines on his brow '' . . . She turned away
And lay crouched at my feet, and in her lap
She took her sister's head and muffled it
Within her robe lest the young maid should see . . .
For my part I looked on as stolidly
As I knew how . . . All hope had fled . . . I feared
That Maximus and all the rest were trapped,
Perchance were dead . . . My mind seemed but a blank,
I could not think, I held my breath and looked
With staring eyes at that strange, dreadful sight . . .

ADVENTURE XVI.

How the First Sacrifice was made to the Sun—The Serpent Stone—The Northman's Death-Song.

The captive that they brought was a young man,
Fair-haired and stalwart, nigh a giant he;
One of the Northern Race, no Goth, but come
From that far land beyond the Frisian shores
That we call Scania . . . I had seen some slaves
In Camulodunum on their way to Rome,
Who were like him defiant, hardy, bold . . .
No doubt the Gaels had ta'en this Chief in war . . .
The Northmen oft in summer raid their coasts;
There's constant feud between them and the Celts;
Now one must pay the penalty for all . . . ,
In part he had paid; wounded sore he seemed,
The gashes still unhealed. His right arm hung
Twisted and useless, slow his halting gait . . .
Yet for all that he bore a cheerful air,
And looked about him coolly, unafraid.
They had stripped off his battle-byrnie, made
Of fine iron rings that gilded shone like gold . . .
His jewelled torque and armlets lay around;
His golden helm, with its high-soaring wings
And eagle's crest, was tumbled on the ground.
He too, like Eochaidh, laughed, as they one wrist

Set in the silver bracelet which had lain
Upon the Altar . . . this they soon made fast
With a strong chain unto the marble feet
Of the huge statue of the Crom Cruaich,
That, stooping, eyed him with an evil smile.
His feet and legs were loose, nor was he bound
In any way save by his fettered wrist.
His roving glance shewed that he wondered now
How he must die; but with proud air he cried
In broken Gaelic such as Northmen use,
" I know not how ye make your offerings,
O Children of the Gael, nor do I care . . .
My time is come . . . Yet grant me one last boon . . .
Let me die singing in our Northmen's way . . .
Ye took me by a trick, else Arngrim's sword
Had piled his death-bed high, and he had lain
Soft-cushioned ere his end on heaps of slain . . .
Though that has been denied, yet I thank ye
That ye do let me stand to meet the foe
Whom all of ye, as I, must one day meet . . .
Now, crippled as I am, in Death I hail
No foe, but friend . . . Then shew his face to me
And mark our greeting, Clansmen of the Gael! "
The High-priest Marven spake with Fincomarke
And with a dark-haired Gael, in battle-gear,

Who seemed Chief Captain of the Royal Guard . . .
Beneath his scarlet cloak his ringed mail gleamed;
A kilt of many stripes reached to his knees,[1]
Made from white-breasted wolf-cubs' soft fine pelts,
Dyed varying shades of purple, blue, and red.
His gilded helm two aurochs' horns adorned . . .
He looked straight at the Northman, in his eyes
Some show of sorrow; plainly I could see
Had he the power the captive had gone free . . .
The old King smiled, " Well would I hear his song . . .
It might amuse me who am growing grey,
Am often dull, and weary of the world . . .
But Donnchadh here, his captor, has the right
To grant him this or not . . . Say, Colla Muinn's son,
My trusted Captain, shall we let him sing? "
Donnchadh replied a little surlily,
" What right have I, Lord? Thy Arch-Druid takes
Such share as he desires of battle-spoil . . .
That man is his, else had I spared his life . . .
He fought well . . . Let him sing an thou so choose
If it will ease his mind " . . . The High-Priest turned
Unto the waiting victim. " Sing! " he said,
" For thus do they who of their free will come
To make atonement . . . Warrior, sing on!

[1] Stephens, *Gododin*, p. 333.

The Children of the Gael would hear thy voice . . .
Short shall thy pains be if sweet is thy song . . .
Stand boldly forth . . . Begin! The time is come " . . .
The Northman sang and in his eyes shone fire,
His mellow voice was pleasant to the ear,
It trembled not, nor shook . . . The words he sang
I understood . . . I knew the Northmen's tongue . . .
My Foster-mother was by birth a Dane . . .
In Camulodunum we had many come
As slaves or soldiers thither . . . This his song:

" Have ye ne'er heard of Hjalmer, the high-minded champion?[2]
How he fought with the Viking Angantyr the Mighty,
For love of fair Ingebjorg, the Swede King's young daughter?
How the twelve sons of Arngrim fought baresark in fury?
How Hjalmer and Odd the Far-travelled o'ercame them?
Though Angantyr had in his hand the sword Tyrfing . .
Like burning flame shining, like glittering sunbeam . . .
With fierce rage fought Angantyr, with fury young Hjalmer;
The hot breath from their mouths, the steam from their nostrils

[2] Cf. *Hervarar Saga*, Örvar Odd's *Saga*, and Vigfusson & Powell, C. P. B. I. 162.

Was like that from a furnace when seven times
heated . . .
Great wounds and grievous dealt they each other,
Strong was Angantyr, but stronger still Hjalmer . . .
While they fought, fought Odd with the Baresarks
eleven,
Angantyr's brethren; one by one did he slay them . . .
Weary, unwounded, he went to seek Hjalmer . . .
He found him pale as a dead man low sitting
On a green hillock, his enemy fallen . . .
Dead lay Angantyr the brave and the mighty,
Dead by the hand of Hjalmer the Champion . . .

'What aileth thee, Hjalmer? Thy colour is changing,
Thy helm is hacked through and thy byrnie all torn . . .
Deep wounds have weakened thee, what shall avail
thee?
Alas! I much fear thy life's thread is worn!'

Hjalmer made answer . . . Hark to his saying!

'O sixteen wounds have I, my byrnie is torn . . .
It is dark, mine eyes see not . . . My steps staggering
falter . . .
No more may I walk, sure my last race is run . . .
The blade of my foeman, the sword of Angantyr,
Hath touched near my heart, the sharp sword-point has
pricked me,
Hardened in poison, my life-days are done!

Five home-steads I owned, but I ne'er cared for farming,
War was my pastime, now war is my bane.
Now must I lie, my life-blood fast ebbing,
In the Island of Samsoe, there must I remain . . .
My life's thread thus sundered by sword, I lie slain.

In the Hall of my Father his Housecarles sit drinking . . .
Ring-decked the high-born Lords, merry are all . . .
The good ale and strong mead doth many men weaken,
Though I die in pain on this far, lonely island,
Pierced by the sword, they'll hear not my call . . .
Drinking, they know not what ill doth befall . . .

Too true was the tale that my dear one did tell me . . .
She said 'tween her tears that she'd see me no more . . .
Draw the ring of red gold from my right arm and give her . . .
Deep will she sorrow and grieve for me sore,
That back to Upsala I come never more.

I left her fair maidens sweet songs a-singing . . .
Though liking well pleasure, home I'd not stay.
Eastward with Soti I hastened; though ringing
In mine ears long followed the sound of their lay . . .
'Twas the last time I went from my good friends away . . .

The maidens at home shall ne'er hear I went screening

My body from blows, nor shall my dear say
That she had cause for sorrow in folks' mocking laughter,
Because in the battle her lover gave way . . .
Tell her I fell in the front of the fray!

Ah! I left her, my darling, my young love, my sweet one,
I left her in haste on that fatal day
When to Agni's meads rode we, there parted, but still I
Heard her dear voice as I rode on my way . . .
Deep must she sorrow and grieve for me sore,
When she knows that on earth she sees Hjalmer no more . . .

Carry to shew her, good friend, as a token
My helm and my byrnie into the King's Hall . . .
The King's daughter shall weep, her heart shall be broken
When she sees the grim proof of her fond lover's fall . .
When she sees my strong byrnie hacked, bloody, and rent,
She shall know my breast pierced, she shall know why 'twas sent.

Oh! I see where folks sit 'neath Sigtuna's high rafters,
The maidens I see who bade me not roam . . .
'Tis a dream . . . A vain vision . . . Never more shall I see them,

Nor drink ale with the warriors, for I come not home . .
Oh! No more for ever shall Hjalmer gay cheer
His friends in the King's Hall . . . No more see his dear . . .

From the east flies a raven from yonder high tree,
After it swooping swift follows an erne . . .
That raven, that eagle, are looking for me
To taste my heart's blood, when their keen eyes discern
That I, their provider, now wait in my turn.

That is the last eagle to whom I'll give prey . . .
I have feasted full many on foes that I've slain;
Now must I lie waiting, helpless, in pain . . .
Though my breath now is failing, my heart doth not quail . . .
What use is repining? Doth grumbling avail?
Nay, friend, grieve thou not, nor drive them away . . .
I shall feast them once more, ere ends my life's day ' . .

How like ye my song, ye sons of the Gael?
It is over . . . Now end me! Doth faint heart avail?
What use is repining? To Odin I go,
To Odin Allfather " . . .

E'en as he sang I heard
The blue-robed Bards their harp-strings gently pluck
In soft accompaniment that sometimes swelled

To a harsh tone of sinister intent
Then died away in plaintive moaning notes . . .
At first they kept their places, but anon
They, slowly moving, circled round and round
The Statue of the God, the Victim bound . . .
And they walked ever as doth go the Sun,
Which movement they call *deisul*, left to right.
Then, as they solemn paced, with mournful chords
As 'twere a dirge their harps gave forth sad tones,
Keeping in time and tune with Arngrim's song.
The Ovates, who had stood ranged in a line,
Now also crept up nearer, gathering round,
Eyeing the Northman closely, taking note
Of every movement . . . He paid them no heed,
I do not think he saw them . . . Far his thoughts . .
Marven, the tall Arch-Druid, pale and stern,
Drew near unseen in shadow of the Shaft . . .
I saw upon his breast the Fylfot gleam,
The Swastika, like to Greek Gamma shaped;
Of gold 'twas made, and on it engraved signs
Of mystic meaning, known but to these Priests . . .
I marked below it, hanging by gold chain,
A strange three-cornered bead that sparkling shone,
Which Marven fingered every now and then
As though he mumbled secret prayer or charm.

Said Liamain, " That is the Glain-Naidr,[2A]
The Serpent-Stone, which doth like crystal shine . . .
It lies encased within that golden bead,
And is an annulet or ring of glass,
Deep blue in colour as the summer sea,
Streaked with keen rays of crimson, white, and green;
Coiled all about with speckled emerald snakes . . .
That ring hath power to shake the earth and sea,
Dissolve the misty air . . . A thing of dread!
Wouldst hear how got? . . . From some acknowledged witch[3]
They cut the soul out that doth in her dwell
With cruel rites of horrid mystery . . .
Sometimes they find it in her head or heart,
More often in her heel, in the strange guise
Of seven-headed serpent, motley-hued.
This speckled monster they guard heedfully
Until the season of th' Autumnal Moon,
When, wondrous to relate, it groweth wings . . .
The seven snakes in one together twined,
Then, foaming, fly aloft and hissing writhe . . .
Within their coils they bear the Egg of Might,[4]

[2A] Cf. Brand, *Pop. Antiq.*, ed. Ellis (1913), pp. 736, 784 ; Pennant, *Second Tour in Scotland* (Pinkerton III. p. 323).

[3] Frazer, *Golden Bough* (*abr. ed.*) (A Tartar Legend) p. 676.

[4] *Ovum Anguinis.* Cf. Pliny, Nat. Hist. Bk. XXIX. 3 (12); E. Davies, *Brit. Druids*, App. 14, p. 577.

The marvellous Stone that clear as crystal shines
Like unto glass . . . That is the Serpent-Stone . . .
This suddenly they drop as they divide
And seven snakes proceed from what seemed one . . .
Th' Arch-Druid, running, marks where it will fall,
So in his mantle catches it; then flies,
Pursued by the malicious, venomous brood,
Until he cross a running stream . . . Thus saved
From their fierce wrath, he carves the magic Egg
Into such annulet as thou see'st there . . .
Look! Now he draws it forth and sets it on
His fore-finger . . . The Silver Crescent now,
Kerridwen's Emblem, with the Golden Wheel
Ten-barred, that is the Symbol of the Sun,
He doth display high-raised upon his brow.
The jet-black branching horns, tipped with bright gold,
He fastens on his head, and Mistletoe
Swiftly entwines with his green Oak-Leaf Crown . . .
When the Arch-Druid from the Golden Bough
Plucks the sere leaves to weave them in his wreath,
It is the sign that he makes ready now
To offer unto Bel the Sacrifice . . .
Oh, watch him! See how stealthily he creeps . . .
And in his hand the gold-hafted flint knife
As sharp as steel . . . Ah! The dread moment comes!

Look, if thou wilt . . . I dare not " . . . Then I saw
With horror gazing, yet constrained to look
By some compelling force, I know not what,
How the Arch-Druid slipped unseen, unheard,
Behind the victim . . . Still the Northman sang
In his clear voice, though now he had grown pale
With that long weary waiting and the strain
Of dire suspense . . . I saw his eyes rove round . . .
The Ovates' cruel faces, as they stared
On him in silence, motionless and grim,
He coolly scanned . . . The youthful victims, who
Lay at the twelve great statues' stony feet,
Each 'neath the cross that soon would bear his weight,
By some strong drug, perchance, all stupified,
Blindfolded, seeing naught, he pitying eyed . . .
The Maenads of the Moon-Goddess he marked,
Who quivering crouched, stayed now from their mad
dance,
Glaring upon him with wild savage looks,
In a half circle ranged behind the Priests . . .
His face grew hard . . With colour flushed his cheeks .
He braced himself to meet whatever came . . .
Boldly he sang, in ringing manly tones :

" I know Incantations, which no Druid knows,[5]
No man's son of the Gael . . .
When taunted and mocked in the ring of my foes,
When sharp troubles assail,
I have help from our Odin 'gainst sorrow and strife,
Against grief 'twill not fail . . .
The Runes of Might
In the dead of Night
Learnt Odin with pain . . .
To them attain
Nine weary nights on the wind-shaken Tree
He hung hungry and thirsty; spear-wounded was He . .
By Himself to Himself was that deed achieved,
Nor might be relieved till He found what he sought . . .
The Knowledge of Wisdom, the Power of True Thought . . .
Nor was He deceived . . . These He received . . .
Nine Songs of Might He learnt and grew wise . . .
Of the precious Mead from Oderir at last
He drank, and all things grew clear to His eyes . . .
He will shelter His son from the blast
Of misfortune and trouble,
Though it come double,
Soon, soon shall all be past.

One thing He taught, one thing I know . . .

[5] Cf. *Havamal* or *Hovamol*, stanzas 139-142, *Alteren Edda*, Hildebrand and Gering. (Also cf. *edn. and trans. Havamal*, Clarke, and *Trans. E. Edda*, Bellows.)

If my limbs men bind that I may not go,
Songs shall release them . . . Soon from my hand
The shackles shall fly . . . Though out of the sky
An arrow should come from afar . . .
On the wind it flies not so fast,
Not so swift drops a falling star,
As I'll speed when I'm freed
To the land of my birth . . .
My spirit still cleaving to Earth,
My wraith shall stand on the shore,
From that well-loved strand no more
To roam . . .
I go home,
My soul borne on the rushing blast,
Its torment o'er, its sorrow past,
Shall at last . . .
Well I know it . . . Find rest
On the breast
Of my Love . . . I go . . . Ah! " . . .

The knife fell!

The song upon his lips changed to a shout . . .
The Arch-Druid struck between his shoulder-blades
With cunning skill to pierce no vital part . . .
He, leaping forward, fell with a loud cry
That ended in a choking scream . . . The Priest
Stooped o'er the victim as he twitching lay,

Drew back his head and deftly cut his throat . . .
In a silver bowl the flowing blood was caught
By two young Ovates who in waiting knelt . . .
The Druids watched with cold unfeeling eyes
His dying struggles . . . The Diviners stood
To augur calmly from each jerking throe,
Each quick convulsive start . . . But soon these ceased
And he lay still . . . The High Priest with skilled hand
Cut from his breast the smoking heart that yet
Pulsed 'neath his touch . . . They strewed the lifeless corpse
With mistletoe and vervain, camomile,
And southern-wood; with water pimpernel
Fresh plucked, that they call samolus
And gather fasting, with the left hand bared,
Nor look behind lest evil fiends appear
To claim that herb that cureth many ills . . .
So all these plants they strewed with careful hands
About the dead man consecrate to Bel . . .
They loosed the lifeless body from the chain,
Then round him sunwise paced they, chanting low . . .
Four of their band, lifting the herb-decked corpse,
Now bare it t'wards the Cauldron . . The High Priest
Mounted the pedestal at the God's feet,
And took the body from the Ovates' hands,

With ease supporting that right heavy weight.
I heard him chanting, " Bel! To Thy great Name
We offer sacrifice. We humbly pray
Thou wilt consume in Thine Eternal Flame
This valiant Warrior whom we send to Thee . . .
Take Thou his Body and his Soul to be
Thine Own, for Us and for our Sins let them Atone! "
Head-first he let the body slowly glide
Into the brazen Cauldron. As it fell
Down from his hands and vanished in the Bowl
A cloud of smoke arose . . . So great the heat,
Fed from some unseen source, that it consumed
The victim instantly . . . Naught was there shewn
Within the Bowl save a white seething mass
Of molten metal that now fiercely glowed,
And bubbling rose and fell for a short while,
Till the slow rippling ceased and all was still.
The bleeding heart within the silver Bowl,
The gallant Northman's arms and harness, they
Laid now upon the Altar . . . It was done . . .
The first grim Sacrifice paid to the Sun! . . .

ADVENTURE XVII.

How the Priest of Nemi came to make Sacrifice unto Kerridwen.

I felt my heart fail utterly as now
The stern Arch-Druid stepped down in the Ring,
And laved his hands in water that was set
Upon the Altar in the copper bowl.
Then with a slow and stately gait he paced
Towards the Stone whereon Count Maurice lay,
Whose face was turned towards the Cromm Cruaich . .
This Stone was tilted, sloping forward, so
He had seen all that passed; yet naught adread
Was his calm peaceful face . . . He lay as still
As in his bed on that uneasy Stone . . .
Four green-robed Ovates bare from out their ranks
A new-made Wheel . . . 'Twas painted a bright red,
Decked richly in all parts with gleaming gold,
And had ten spokes . . . I wondered how they meant
To use this thing . . . I wept for pity then
That Maximus came not . . . In grief and shame
I bowed my head . . . Richilla, weeping too,
Held tight my hand . . . Liamain, crouching low,
Sat at our feet . . . She spake no more to me,
But set her drooping head against my knee,

Closing her weary eyes . . . I looked with fear
And saw the Maenads brought another Wheel,
Made of fine silver . . . 'Tis Kerridwen's sign
When she is honoured as fair Arianrhod,
So had I heard from Mela . . . These two Wheels[1]
They set on either side of the Doom-Stone . . .
And now strode forward nine youths of the Gael,
Nine of the Picts, and then nine after nine,
Till nine times nine lads stood within the Ring
And cast their upper garments on the ground;
Stripped to the waist they stood, their strong limbs bare . . .
The Arch-Druid spake not, but his right hand stretched
Towards Count Maurice, held by four Ovates
In their relentless, firm, unyielding grasp.
They gripped him tighter, heaving him aloft;
So held him poised, and stood expectant thus,
Waiting the High-Priest's word, that they might dash
The helpless body of the victim down
To break his back upon that sharp-ridged Stone.
The Arch-Druid stood with right hand still outstretched,
His eyes fixed on the radiant light that crept
From Stone to Stone . . . I saw the Ovates' arms

[1] Frazer, *Abr. Ed.*, pp. 639-640.

Quiver beneath the strain, but they stood firm,
And all the people in tense silence gazed.

Then through that stillness pierced a murmuring sound
Of far-off voices, chattering, confused . . .
A distant babbling . . . For towards the north
The close-packed crowd was swaying to and fro,
Turning towards the Field of the One Door . . .
Then through the press there forced his way a man,
Who hurrying sped with high uplifted arm . . .
The wondering crowd fell back to let him pass,
For on his right hand shone the Sign of Power,
King Fincomarke's right famous Onyx Ring . . .
"A messenger!" some shouted . . . "Colla Uais
Hath got some news . . . He sendeth to the King"—
"Let pass his messenger . . . Pass on! Pass on!"—
"Look! There behind ride Colla and his men . . .
What can have chanced? Why come they back again?"
Cried Colla to the folk, "Friends, all is well . . .
The Bearer of the Ring hath told us so;
He hath authority . . . Come, let us through . . .
We'd see the Sacrifice as well as you" . . .
Now through the opening crowd ran on this man . . .
I saw him plainly . . . 'Twas the galley-slave,
Petronius Niger, haggard, muddy, grim,

Flushed with swift running, naked save his clout . . .
He sprang towards the opening of the Ring,
The Guards stood back, the Druids let him in . . .
They feared the Onyx . . . In a loud clear voice
He cried, " Hold, Priest! I bring a Substitute . . .
I claim the Right of the Self-Offering . . .
The Free-Will Gift unto the Lord of Day!
I have come far . . . Deny me not, or know
By Druid-Law my sins shall fall on ye . . .
And they are many . . . Heavy were the price
If ye should stay my willing sacrifice! "
The Arch-Druid spake astonished, wrathfully,
His white beard shook with anger. " Who art thou
That dar'st thus interrupt our solemn Rites?
Whence art thou, fellow? " He made answer swift . .
The Gaelic tongue he spake full easily . . .
" I am a sinner who doth claim the right
Which thou, most reverend Priest, well know'st is
mine . . .
I would make due Atonement for great sin
And save my soul, so prosper all of ye . . .
Though I'm of alien blood, there is a bond
Of union 'tween us that thou'lt not deny
Is stronger even than the tie of race . . .
I am a Priest of One whom ye adore . . .

This will I prove to ye . . . I hither come
From the far fields of Italy . . . Near Rome
I dwelt by the Arician Lake that lies
Below the Alban Mount . . . It was my fate
To be a Priest of Nemi . . . I have long[2]
Served Dian of the Woods . . . Ye know her well . . .
Ye name her Arianrhod, whose Silver Wheel
I see displayed . . . Kerridwen is she called
By the wild Maenads of the Amnian Isles . . .
In her most sacred Grove by Nemi's Lake
I lived apart . . . 'Tis called th' Arician Grove;
The Lake, Diana's Mirror . . . Calm and deep,
Embowered in grassy hollow, lone it lies
Ringed by great chestnut trees and ancient oaks,
Black poplars, stately beeches, solemn pines,
That clothe the Alban Mount as with a robe . . .
Hid in the inmost depths of this dense grove
There grows a great holm-oak, a mighty tree,
On one of whose strong branches ever clings
The sacred Mistletoe . . . See! Still I bear
As proof of my strange tale the Golden Bough " . . .
He drew from out his loin-cloth a small sprig,
Whose withered leaves and stalk with golden gleam
Flickered and sparkled . . . " Druids all! Mark ye[3]

[2] Cf. Frazer, *Golden Bough, Abr. Ed.* ch. 1.

[3] Cf. Virgil, *Aeneid*, VI. 206-211.

How in the sun it gleams, how in the breeze
Its golden leaves soft rustle! '' All those there
Were struck with awe . . . They gazed at him in fear . . .
The High Priest bade the Ovates lower then
The victim to his feet . . . " Let him stand there
Till we hear further . . . For the Gods to-day
Surely have sent us here their messenger . . .
Say on, O Priest of Nemi! That the will
Of Dian Nemorensis may be known . . .
The time grows short . . . What wouldest thou of us? ''
Then spake the slave in quick yet earnest tones,
" The Goddess bade me tell you of my sin,
That by your aid I might her pardon win . . .
Her Shrine Orestes set by Nemi's Lake . . .
When he fled from the Tauric Chersonese
He brought with him from the Crimean shore
The Image of the Goddess. Stern her rites:
Each year she doth require the death of men.
Now it was so ordained to keep this Law
If none else came, each year her Priest must die;
But if a stranger drew nigh to the Grove
The Priest had right to slay such in his stead.
Also there is a Law that any slave
Who fled his master might make an attempt
To break the Holy Branch from the great Oak . . .

None else allowed . . . If he succeeded, then
He had the right to meet Diana's Priest
In single combat . . . If he slew him . . . Well . . .
He had earned sanctuary, was immune . . .
He reigned in the Priest's stead, known from that time
By the proud title, King of Nemi's Wood,
Rex Nemorensis . . . None but he might pluck
The Golden Bough, that mystic magic Key
That doth unlock the Door of Mystery.
Not many mortals dare this Key to use,
Though once Aeneas gathered it as bid[4]
By the dread Sybil, that the Gates of Hell
Should be unbarred to him when he would go
Through the dim regions of the Underworld.
Now, by some chance that doth concern ye not . . .
For whether just or unjust was my fate
Matters no whit to either Pict or Gael . . .
I for my crimes was sentenced, not to death,
But to the harder lot of slavery . . .
I, who was once a Roman Officer
Of noble birth, became a wretched thrall . . .
Worked in the mines, moiled in the fields in chains,
For five long years . . . Yet other year I slaved
As scavenger to clean the streets of Rome,

[4] Cf. Virgil, *Aeneid*, VI. 141-155.

To clear the drains . . . In filth, by all despised,
I humbly drudged . . . Then, by some lucky chance,
Winning the favour of my Task-Master,
In the Imperial Stables I was set;
A grace allowed to few . . . There I worked hard,
Finding the horses more my friends than men . . .
A former comrade, seeing me one day
Employed in carting dung, grimed to the eyes,
Cried in contemptuous pity, so I thought,
'What thou? Petronius, thou? Why, hang it, man!
What waste of good material have we here!
A swordsman such as thou wert shall not be
Flung on a dung-heap longer' . . . Sneering thus,
Rutilius laughed . . . Then, half in mocking scorn,
Half anxious to get gold to pay his debts,
Hired me to have me trained for public fights . . .
As gladiator I was famed, won vain applause,
Made money for my master . . . For myself
Was popular, forsooth! . . . Curse the vile brutes
Who loved to see us wretches fight for life,
While they lolled back and clapped quite at their ease,
Winning their wagers by our agonies! . . .
I took advantage of my bettered state
To run away . . . Taking the likely risk
Of dying shamefully in direst pain

If I were caught . . . I made for Nemi's Grove,
The Sanctuary of escaping slaves . . .
I knew the rules . . I watched my time and chance . .
I was more stalwart than Diana's Priest . . .
Though none so old, he had grown grey with dread.
I brake the Bough, I stole the Mistletoe,
I met the Wood-King 'neath the gleaming moon
And slew him easily . . . His wavering eye,
His furtive looks, shewed that sharp fear had grown
His master . . . That same night deep in the wood
I buried his blood-boltered grisly corpse;
And in his stead I walked, I watched, I reigned . . .
Sure never King wore such uneasy Crown!
At first I found the solitude most sweet
And pleasant to my mind . . . I who was used
To the foul company of felon slaves . . .
But soon I grew afraid . . . Far in the night
I prowled about the Holy Oak, drawn sword
In ready hand, and very warily
I peered into the brushwood; cautiously
I eyed the craggy cliffs of the dark Mount
That soared above the Wood; I watched the Lake,
Whose placid waters slept beneath the Moon . . .
I learnt to fear my shadow as I crept
About the Sacred Grove . . . Year in, year out

Must I in winter and in summer fare,
Drenched by the rain and shivering in the blast,
Or scorched by the fierce sun; half starved at times,
Dependent on the scanty offerings
Of chance wayfarers . . . For within the Grove
Few birds would nest, the fishes in the Lake
Were ever scarce . . . Nor might I leave my Wood
Lest men should slay me as a renegade . . .
So kept I my lone vigil . . . If I'd rest,
Snatching a moment's troubled jerking sleep,
'Twas at the peril of my life . . . I heard
The voice of him I slew, and ever he
Would whisper in mine ear as the breeze blew
Chill whistling through the pine-trees, ' Soon shalt thou
Be slain as thou slew'st me . . . The Slayer comes,
The Slayer shall be slain . . . The Slayer goes,
And mid the Shades for ever mourns his woes ' . . .
I heard the shrill wind sweeping round the hill,
Then, lingering, creeping through the dark Wood till,
Groaning and moaning, whined it cold and chill,
So, roused anew to fury, shrieking passed . . .
And in its voice I heard the drear refrain,
' The Slayer comes . . . The Slayer shall be slain ' . . .
Its icy breath I felt about my brow,

And shudd'ring strove to shelter from the blast . . .
These echoes maddened me . . . Though often I
Had longed for death, I would not murdered die . . .
I knew that when I lost my strength and skill,
My sleight of hand, or if I should fall sick
Of fever, I should perish . . . Were there not slaves
Longing to save their lives at mine expense?
I should grow old, and then . . . And then be killed
Like slaughtered swine . . . My throat cut one dark
night . . .
Or strangled from behind . . . Trembling I swore
This should not be . . . The passers-by who came,
Though rarely, to the woodland Shrine, I loathed . . .
I saw them eye me furtively, afraid . . .
For doubtless I was grim and fierce of face . . .
I feared them too . . . At last my courage failed . . .
One autumn eve I fled. No longer I
Felt that I could endure that sombre wood . . .
The dreary forest's black and dismal hue
Against the threat'ning orange of the sky
As the sun dipped below the gloomy Lake
Oppressed my soul . . . I wept as though a child . . .
Each sight, each sound, in that wild place I feared . . .
The mournful sighing of the moaning wind
That through the matted creaking branches wailed . . .

The lapping of the water on the shore
As though dead souls paced there for evermore . . .
The crying of the owls that hoarsely screeched
As though they counted up and mocked my sins . . .
The clutching twigs that grasped me as I passed
And dragged me back, their tendrils in my hair . . .
Those creeping suckers feeling for my face
To scratch and blind me, were they thorns and briars?
Were they not rather dead men's groping hands
Whose bony fingers caught me by the throat
And sought to throttle me when unaware?
These things appalled me and I fled that place
Regardless of the pale reproachful face
Of the Moon-Goddess who looked down on me
Through the dark tangled boughs . . . I thus betrayed
My trust . . . Then marvel not I paid . . .
Caught by a cruel chance next day at noon
As I drew near the coast t'wards th' Inuian Bay,
By a Sea-Prefect just then short of men . . .
I was reprieved again . . . Yet hard my doom,
For I was dragged to the Ergastulum,
Scourged as absconding slave . . . Though none knew I
Was late the Priest of Nemi, else my fate
Had been to die burnt at the penal stake . . .
Then, at that brutal Navarch's keen request,

Having been branded as the Law demands,
I was sent to the Fleet to pull an oar
For life in his curst galley . . . I endured
Their cruel mercy . . . 'Twas a death in life . . .
I was still young, still hoped . . . Until hope died
Beneath the lash . . . Yet still I lived and loathed
Myself and hated other men . . . I clung
To life that I might be revenged . . . We sailed
For foreign parts, to Northern Seas we came
To harry Picts and Celts . . . I know not why . . .
We galley-slaves know naught, but at the oar
Smarting must tug and toil until we die,
Worn-out . . . A few days since in a fierce gale
The ship, curse her, in fog ran on the rocks
Off the east coast of this inclement Isle . . .
All drowned save I, who, summoned from my bench,
Had been unchained to take some punishment,
When we crashed on the rocks . . . Flung on the shore,
I sat and thought a while on my past life . . .
My sins, my woes, and all my wretchedness,
Then laid my head down and exhausted slept.
Now in my sleep I dreamed . . . A great light shone
As it were the rays from a bright silver Wheel . . .
And in my dreams I heard Diana call . . .
She bade me rise and go towards the West . . .

"There shalt thou make atonement by thy death.
Offer thyself unto the Lord of Day
In great Kerridwen's name. Thy life lay down
Upon the sharp-ridged Stone . . . Thy life I claim,
Not that of criminal or prisoner,
Who all protesting, discontented, dies . . .
For I would have the willing gift of one
Who is my Votary." I woke and came
Unto this place where ye make Festival
And offer Sacrifice . . . I claim my right
As Dian's Priest to here give up my life.

The Arch-Druid spake, "So be it! Brother, come!
The Sun waits not . . . Ard-Righ! This Cornishman
I here set free . . . Nor shall he now be harmed
Who still remains the Envoy of the Sun . . .
Whate'er his faults they are remitted him."
Quoth Fincomarke, and dark his gloomy frown,
"I like it not . . . Yet bow to the Decree
Of the Arch-Druid . . . Ho there! Guards of mine!
My Captain Donnchadh, give the Cornishman
Thy cloak . . . A drink of wine . . . Yet hold him fast
That he may watch his Substitute depart
Unto the Gods . . . First one thing I would know
Of thee, rash stranger, who dost choose to go

In such dread fashion hence into the dark;
Before thou tak'st that path, say whence had'st thou
That onyx ring which I have lately missed?
Aye . . . Several of my retinue have paid
The price of carelessness . . . My ring was lost,
So they have lost their skins as was but fair . . .
Their pelts hang drying yonder in that field . . .
I love not waste . . . What there was left of them
I fed unto my hungry hawks and hounds."
Said then Petronius, " King of Alba! Know
'Twas brought me in my dream the night I lay
On the sea-shore " . . . Said Fincomarke, " Is't so?
That would account for what I also saw
In vision . . . On a stranger's hand I thought
I ever saw my ring . . . Yet 'twas no priest . . .
No galley-slave . . . But Roman warrior! "
Said then Petronius grimly, " That was I . . .
Once I was Tribune in the Imperial Guard . . .
Thou see'st my dishonour . . . Mine ill fame
Thou canst read plainly in these stripes and scars
That mar my body . . . Question me no more . . .
Ye Gods! The shame of it! . . . Ye Gods! My
shame! . . .
Enough, O King! Here is thine onyx ring . . .
It has well served the purpose of the Gods."

He drew it from his finger, giving it
Unto Donnchadh the Gael. He carried it
To Fincomarke who set it on his hand.

Said Maurice suddenly, who had stood by
Half dazed, confused, leaning against his guards,
" Let me die as appointed . . . At the cost
Of other's life I will not buy mine own . . .
Stand back, O generous stranger! I'm prepared . . .
Keep me not lingering, Druids . . Come! . . Begin! " . .
Petronius laughed. " Think not it is for thee . . .
I know thee not . . . No! 'Tis for my soul's sake,
Not thine," he said, and earnestly he stared
Into the Cornish Count's bewildered eyes,
Who would have spoken; but Petronius frowned,
" Would'st ruin now my plan? I have sore sinned,
I make atonement thus . . . I stand to lose
My life that naught is worth . . . I save my soul,
Perchance, O Jove! . . . Mine honour," muttered he . . .
"Arch-Druid, I am ready! " . . . Marven signed
Unto his ministers . . . The Ovates came,
They stripped the rags from off the victim's frame,
And with pure water from the Holy Well
They laved his limbs . . . Gay garlands taking then . . .
Flowers of the woodlands, marsh and meadow-lands,

Leaves of the willow and the rowan-tree,
The oak and ash, the aspen and the birch . . .
They twined about him. As this stranger made
A free-will offering, so all in green
They garbed him with due honour; then the crown
Of oak and mistletoe from the Count's head
They took, and placed it on the slave's instead . . .
They gave him wine to drink from golden bowl . . .
He made libation to the Gods and poured
Some drops upon the earth, then pledged them all . . .
" Here's to your fortune, Children of the Gael!
What ye deserve, receive! Health and long life
To those whom the Gods favour! . . To me, death! . .
Be it swift or slow, at last I shall find peace . . .
The Sun shines on the Stone . . . Give me release! " . . .
They seized him then and swung him off his feet . . .
He unresisting lay in their strong arms . . .
They held him poised and waited for the word . . .
Maurice rushed forward, but the Captain gripped
His right arm fast . . . " Ho, Tarla! Hold the fool . . .
Gag him if need be " . . . Held by two strong Celts
The Count stood still perforce . . . His troubled mind
In his perturbed face shewn . . . Young Eochaidh lay
Still enough now upon the farther Stone,
And sweat ran down his face which had turned grey·

He twisted round and watched . . . I tried to pray
But found no words . . . My heart was beating fast . . .
Now had the Sun crept slowly o'er the Stone
Until at length its rays lit up the face
Of the man high upheld . . . The High Priest raised
Both hands unto the sky . . . With sickening crash
The Druids dashed their victim on the Stone
And held him there, his legs and arms outstretched . . .
His back was smashed upon its knife-like edge . . .
I swear he made no sound . . . I thought him stunned,
Until I saw his pain-stricken white face
Turned upwards to the pitiless hot sun . . .
His eyes were open and his twitching lips
Shewed that he was still conscious . . . Once he strove
To turn a little, but all power had gone
From out his lower limbs . . . The Druids came,
With cruel slowness setting the two Wheels
Upon his naked breast . . . The strong-thewed youths
Hauled hard on ropes and pulleys that the Wheels
Swiftly revolved, now forward, now swung back,
With ever-quickening speed, and rolling rubbed
The oak-wood spindles that were set beneath,
Until the nine of these at last began
To gather heat from the fast-spinning wheels . . .
Now a spark flew . . . Now flashed another . . . till

The Wild-Fire kindled on that living breast[5] . . .
A roar of joy went up from thousand throats . . .
The Druids chanted and the Maenads danced;
In horrid triumph the hoarse horns loud blared . . .

" The Need-Fire burns," said the Arch-Druid, "Come,
Take ye, my children, fire for all your homes . . .
Bel's blessing be on each new-kindled hearth!
Kerridwen prosper ye! See! The flame burns
Brightly and clearly . . . Nor shall it grow less . . .
Add fuel, Ovates! Incense sprinkle now
Upon the victim's breast . . . If he would cry
Aloud unto the Gods check not his voice . . .
It is his privilege to speak or sing
As he shall choose who is our Messenger,
And our fair Sin-Offering unto the Gods . . .
The more he suffers now the more shall we
Enjoy throughout the year prosperity . . .
Then add more fuel, Ovates! Dance and sing!
Cenn Cruaich smiles on us when he doth hear
The voice of him who kindleth the Need-Fire
In his own person . . . Therefore, Dian's Priest!
Cry for the honour of the Goddess loud,
And if it will relieve thee, curse and scream!

[5] Prescott, *Mexico*, Ed. Kirk, p. 60, Bk. I. ch. IV.; Southey, *Madoc*, Pt. 2, c. 26.

It pleaseth well the Gods and tells the folk
Who stand far off that we make Sacrifice."

By now the pain had grown so fierce and keen
That beads of sweat ran down the victim's face,
And, spite his strong endurance, I heard him
Groan 'tween clenched teeth . . . The old King hearing,
smiled . . .
" Our Roman friend repents his rashness now
When 'tis too late " . . . Petronius calmly spake,
And now I heard no tremor in his voice,
" Nay! I repent it not, King Fincomarke . . .
Look to thyself, O Leader of the Gael!
O Shepherd of the Picts! . . . Now comes the hour
That shall see shattered all thy vaunted power . . .
Dost thou not hear aught save my groans? . . . Ah,
God! "
He muttered, " Long the path to peace, and strait
And difficult the thorny Gate of Death " . . .
He groaned again . . . Then boldly, fiercely, spake . . .
" Hearken, thou foolish King! . . . Nay! 'Tis too late,
And ye are trapped . . . Ye people of the Gael . . .
Blood-thirsty Picts! Of blood now drink your fill!
Hark! Hear ye not like thunder o'er the moor
The trampling hooves of thousand horses beat?
Hark! Hear ye not the trumpet's merry sound?

Ho! See ye not how o'er the stony ground
The Cohorts march . . . Hark to the ordered feet
Of Rome's drilled Legionaries! See o'erhead
The Eagles hover! Fly, Sons of the Gael!
Ye cursèd Picts, take cover! 'Ware your fate!
Evoë! Maximus! Hail! Imperàtor, Hail!
Too late ye seek escape! Ye blundering fools!
Ye are surrounded! '' . . . He had spoken sooth . . .

With a swift rush, as clear the trumpets pealed,
The Roman cavalry swept o'er the plain . . .
Adown the Northern heights to join them rode
In reckless wise and with a rousing cheer
Geraint and his Asturians, who had slipped
Unseen along the shore cloaked by the rocks . . .
They drave the crowd of startled Picts and Gaels
In wild confusion back . . . The Body-Guard
Were cut down, thrust through, ridden over, ere
They saw their foe, who seemed to rise in force
From out the earth, so sudden was their rush,
So swift their bold assault . . . In vain the Kings,
In vain the Chieftains called, as with drawn swords
They strove to rally their bewildered men;
Who, with the unarmed, struggling, shouting crowd
Mingled, heard not . . . Or hearing, naught obeyed

Ere they were swiftly slain . . . The Chieftains then,
With some few of their guards, were forced within
The great Stone Circle, where they stood at bay
Behind the Statue of the Cromm Cruaich,
Ringed by their foes . . . With them the wrathful
Priests,
The Druids in their white and speckled robes,
Were driven back, cursing their enemies
With words of awe, and muttering hellish charms.
The frantic Gallicenae crouching screamed
Their shrill fierce imprecations . . . Suddenly,
With maddened shrieks they rose, and through the
ranks
Of cursing Druids rushed. Infuriate, wild,
Their streaming locks wide floating on the wind,
They ran, in each hag's hand a blazing torch,
Late kindled in the flame upon the breast
Of the still living victim . . . Right and left
The Druids stood with high-uplifted hands,
Calling on Heaven for vengeance on their foes . . .
Our soldiers stared irresolute, they stayed
Their hands from smiting, waiting for the word
From Maximus to advance upon this crew . . .
It came not . . . For the Prefect sat his horse
And stared as they . . . Young Theodosius fumed,
But dared not speak his mind . . . So waited all.

ADVENTURE XVIII.

How Scathach the Queen of Shadows spake with Maximus, and how he preferred her Curses to her Good-will—How the Arch-Druid practised Wizardry and the Gaelic Chieftains vanished in a mist—What Petronius the Galley-Slave told Maximus before he died.

Leading the Priestesses a woman came[1] . . .
A wondrous sight . . . Like russet flame her hair,
Now ebon black, now with a flashing gleam
As of live fire its heavy tresses shone . . .
With jewelled fillet set in gold 'twas bound,
And o'er her shoulders to her girdled waist
It streamed . . . About her neck a yellow torque
She wore of twisted gold and bronze; and o'er
Her breasts a tunic was close drawn, its hue
Of many colours, fastened with gold clasp . . .
About her arms and thighs I saw the sheen
Of warriors' pale bronze[2] . . . The snow-white skin
Of a great bear from her left shoulder hung . . .
Her girdle gemmed with crimson rubies glowed
In the bright sunshine . . . Cowskin stained deep red

[1] *Scathach.* Cf. Mary A. Hutton, *The Táin*, Bks. VI., VII.; F. Macleod, *Barbaric Tales*, *Dominion of Dreams*, etc., and E. Hull, *Cuchullin Saga.*

[2] *Findrinnie*, an amalgam of silver and bronze. Cf. *The Táin*, p. 456.

Covered her feet, with deerskin thongs her legs
Were gartered to the knee . . . In her white face,
Pale like fine ivory, her sombre eyes
Were as deep pools of darkness, lit at times
By glints of sparkling flame; two thin red streaks
Across the snowy pallor of her face
Were her tight-pressed and resolute close lips.
Hard-visaged was she and with fierce grim air,
Despite her beauty . . . Deep-toned her great voice
As roughly she demanded, " Wherefore now
Do ye thus tremble, Chieftains of the Gael?
Why falter ye, why cower? . . Shame! Black shame!
Why waver ye like quivering aspen-leaves
That quaking yield to every passing breeze?
Must then a woman shew ye what to do?
Shall Scathach of the Mist protect ye all? "
She stood and faced her foes . . . The Roman Horse
Had won the Bridgeway, held the Outer Ring,
And every avenue and path they barred . . .
Upon the ridges of the cliffs I saw
The gleam of spears, the glittering of shields . . .
The Second Legion's Badge, the Capricorn,
I saw upreared, and dragons open-mouthed
Were borne aloft, wide-gaping in the wind . . .
Its Cohorts had been marching long ere dawn,

And now were come to clinch the victory . . .
There lightly sprang the tall Aquilifer,
Sempronius Mutius, who the Eagle bare . . .
Leaping from ledge to ledge he led them on . . .

From that glad sight I turned and saw below
How Maximus took order . . . From the Stones
The victims were released . . . The Ovates lay
Bleeding about their Altar . . . Several men
Gathered about Petronius, screening him
So that I saw not if the man yet lived . . .
Prince Eochaidh leant on young Geraint's strong arm;
A horseman's palla[3] round his shivering form
They wrapt . . . He tried to smile . . . Stammering he spake,
" I never thought to hear with unfeigned joy
The Roman trumpet-call . . . Nor in my foes
To find my friends . . . I thank ye . . . I'd no mind
To be Bel's Sacrifice to please the whim
Of Niall's Druid . . . Where is Caren's son?
Let us but meet . . . I'll wipe out this disgrace
In his heart's blood! " Fuming, he stood, restrained
By young Gerontius . . " Wait, Sir, wait! Not yet .
The Prefect speaks . . . Hear him! " . . .

[3] cloak.

On his grey horse
That plunging reared sat Maximus my Lord;
The restless beast he reined in with firm hand,
Back on its haunches forcing it, until
It stood there snorting, while his soothing hand
Patted its tossing foam-bespattered neck . . .
Coolly he spake in his clear ringing voice,
" I make not war on women . . . Stand back! Thou . . .
Queen . . . Priestess . . . Phantom . . . Whatsoe'er thou
art!
O lovely Fiend! Cease thy vain outcry . . . Know!
I would speak with the Leader of the Gael,
Ard-Righ of Alba . . . Cormac Finn the King,
And not with Druid-Priest or Amazon."
Said Scathach in soft tones, melodious
As distant bells that ring across the sea
Sweet sounding to the ear of mariner,
Yet deep-toned as the booming of the waves
In hollow caverns rolling . . . Her white teeth
Shewed 'twixt her thin red lips in a strange smile,
And her green eyes were gleaming hungrily . . .
" What! Warrest thou not on women, Maximus?
Dost thou despise us then? It seemeth so,
When thou wouldst thus ignore me . . . I, the Queen
Who have full many a mighty hero trained . . .

Cuchulain was my pupil . . . I taught him[4]
Some useful arts pertaining unto war,
Things that a chariot-chief must ne'er forget . . .
Tricks with the sword-blade, how to cast a spear,
The rope-feat and the cat's-feat, salmon-leap,
The whirl of a scythed-chariot, swift blow
And counter-blow . . . The hero's whoop, the twist
And turn round spear-points, how to deftly swarm
Up a tall lance-shaft and upon its point
Right the poised body . . . 'Tis a pretty feat . . .
These and a thousand wiles of strategy
I could teach thee . . . Much it were good to know
About thy future I have power to shew;
For I am practised in dark magic Arts,
Learnt long ago from the Chaldaean Priests
When I in Scythia ruled the Amazons.
Wouldst thou win lasting fame, O Maximus?
I know the Secret Path that leads to Power . . .
Come to my Land . . . The Isle of Shadows . . . There
I'll welcome thee, O Hero! Who hath proved
A match for the best Champions of the Gael . . .
And thou shalt rest and dream in my fond arms,
For surely thou art he for whom long years
I've waited, whom I've met and loved in dreams . . .

[4] E. Hull, *Cuchullin Saga* (*Wooing of Emer*), p. 80.

Oh, many men have wooed me, but not one
Since Cuchulain went have I desired, not one
Might I abide . . . They wearied me. So all
Who came have perished by my stern decree . . .
I watched their torments, laughing, till they died[5] . . .
But thou art different . . . In thee I discern
My fitting mate, one born to rule the World . . .
Wilt thou not come, most noble Emperor,
When Scathach asks who is not used to plead? ''
Cried Maximus, and laughed in angry scorn,
'' O Amazonian Witch, how dost thou err!
Thou art a paltry soothsayer indeed . . .
I am but Prefect of the Asturian Horse,
An honorary Tribune of the Sixth,[5A]
Captain new-made of Hadrian's Wall, naught else . . .
Nay! I had nigh forgot . . . By Britons styled
Regent of Cornwall for my wife, its Queen . . .
A thankless task,'' he muttered bitterly,
'' For which I get small credit and much blame . . .
Though some few Britons say they love me well,
Many revile me . . . Rome doth mock my claim . . .
I am a man of straw put to much shame . . .

[5] Cf. F. Macleod, *Barbaric Tales* (*Laughter of Scathach the Queen*) and *Dominion of Dreams.*

[5A] Cf. McCaul, *Brit. Roman Inscr.*, p. 287-8.

Why dost thou taunt me with false prophecies?
Thy love I want not, nor thy witcheries . . .
Vile wretch, curst evil Sorceress, begone!
Delay me not . . . Stand back! . . . Ho! Cormac Finn!
Behind a woman hid'st thou? Yield thee, King!"
Quoth she, "Yet hear me, reckless Maximus!
And I will give thee all thy heart's desire . . .
Thou art not, but thou shalt be, great if thou
Turn now thy face towards Imperial Rome.
Leave Alba to the Gael . . . Quit Britain's shore . . .
Southward thy path . . . In Italy thy home . . .
Why thus contemptuous sneer and turn away?
Thou scornest me, thou wilt not hear . . . Thou fool! . . .
I could have helped thee . . . Saved thee . . . Go thy ways!
E'en as thy countryman Germanus died,[6]
Slain by my hand, for all his Roman pride,
In far-off Scythia, so shalt thou die!
Thou shalt repent this cruel insolence
And crave my mercy when it is too late" . . .
She stood aside and laughed in mirthful wise,
But venomous the gleam in her dark eyes . . .
Maximus flushed; he rode towards the Stone

[6] Cf. *The Táin*, Mary A. Hutton, P. 492. (Ref. to *The Germanus Poem.*)

That in the centre of the Circle towered . . .
" Surrender ! " cried he, " Yield thee, Cormac Finn,
With all thy Chieftains, or by Romulus
And the great Might of Rome ! I'll slay ye here,
And ye shall roll in your own Beltane fires,
A sacrifice most fitting . . . Had ye dared
To slaughter Maurice, Cradock's noble son,
I would not spare one man of ye to-day . . .
As 'tis, thy Druids, King, must answer now
For such lives as are lost . . . Let the High-Priest
Be yielded up . . . Gerontius, thine his charge !
Have the old villain safely trussed and bound . . .
King Cormac, for the last time, wilt thou yield ?
Thou art trapped here . . . See ! How my Horsemen
ring
The Standing Stones . . . Look ! Where my Cohorts
march,
Advancing o'er the plain . . . Thy Clansmen lie
Dead on the moor, or are dispersed and fled . . .
I will give quarter even as I said
To thee and to thy Chieftains; but these Priests
Must stand their trial . . . Rome forbids the deeds
That thou hast countenanced . . . And they must die
If they are guilty " . . . Cormac Finn spake high,
" By some foul treachery hast thou come here

To spy upon us! . . . Thou shalt gain no good,
No profit from it, cursèd Maximus!
O mongrel Briton! Thou degenerate cur,
Come of great Coël's line in evil hour,
Disaster dog thy footsteps from to-day . . .
Thou shalt go far, win much, and lose it all . . .
Aye! Thy proud head shall lie low in the dust
Ere all is done . . . What! Wouldst thou seize me thus,
Who am the mighty King of Alba? . . . Try!
O Prefect of the Asturians . . . Bid thy hounds,
Thy Roman ruffians, bind the limbs of Kings!
Thou fool! Stand back! . . . Avaunt!" . . . Cried Maximus,
"Theodosius, forward! Andragathius!
Take each of ye a troop . . . Dismount your men!
Seize on the person of King Fincomarke!
Arrest the Chieftains!" Loud the bugles blew . . .
The troopers ran across the central space
Of the Stone Circle, but or e'er they came
Unto Cromm Cruaich's statue they fell prone . . .
Some on their faces, some fixed on their knees . . .
So stayed immovable as though they too
Were turned to statues . . . Maximus, amazed,
Spurred on his horse, but it refused and reared . . .
He could not make it face the invisible

Strange ghostly barrier, that seemed rising fast
Between him and his foes . . . Though naught was seen,
Yet something barred the way . . . The Witch-Queen
laughed,
" Ho! Maximus, great Emperor! How now?
Why dost thou not march on us? Bid thy men
Seize on the King of Alba! Why do they
Neglect their duty? . . . . Do they mutiny?
Is this the far-famed Roman discipline?
Wilt thou not come, great Caesar? . . . See, we wait . . .
Hast thou turned coward? Why, e'en thine own men
Mock at thee, Maximus!" Laughing loud, she
jeered . . .
In sudden wrath the Prefect sharply cried,
" Silence, vile Sorceress! Or thou shalt boil
In thine own Cauldron . . . Lord of all the World!
What does the she-wolf? . . . Theodosius, look!
She is not mortal, but some frightful wraith . . .
Mark how she changes shape!" We looked in fear[7]
And saw the wondrous beauty of the Queen
Alter before our eyes . . . Hung from her belt,
Her golden-hilted sword grew tarnished o'er,
A broken scabbard shewed the rusted blade . . .
Her lovely face of soft white pearl and cream

[7] Cf. Campbell: *Tales of the West Highlands*, Vol. III. (*The Yellow Muileartach*), pp. 122-124.

Was now blue-black with lustre as of coal . . .
Her ivory teeth were like great tusks become
Of grimy bone, and in her head there shone
But one deep cavernous eye that darted flame
Swifter than falling star in winter sky . . .
Upon her head, in lieu of raven locks
With glint of tawny gold and silky sheen,
Was twisted brushwood, thorny and unkempt,
Like to an ancient aspen-tree's gnarled roots . . .
Her shining armour turned to dragon's scales,
And in her hand her slender battle-spears
Now shewed like flaming stars of shooting fire!
She shrieked in horrid glee, "Aye! Callest thou
The Queen of Shadows ' Wretch ' and ' Evil Witch '?
Wouldst work her ruin, burn her in the flame,
Who is immortal? Foolish Maximus,
Who dost refuse my gifts . . . I will give thee
Thy fitting guerdon, for in battle I
Will fly behind thee to thy bitter woe . . .
I will requite thee for thy courtesy,
Thou warrior, who on woman warrest not . . .
Think not to slay me . . . No man yet was born
Who may harm Scathach, nor doth that man live
Who can destroy her power . . . Wouldst know my
Name?

My Secret Name? Hear thou, and quake with fear!
I am the Yellow Muileartach, the Witch
From out the Western Sea who reigns afar
In Eastern Lands . . . In Scythia am I known,[8]
There rule I over myriad Amazons . . .
But my true home is in the Isle of Skye,
The Land of Shadows and the Realm of Mist . . .
Terror and fear lurk not within my breast,
Nor is there aught on earth, in air, or sea
That daunts me or mine Amazons . . . Know thou
That thou, though boasting of thy Roman name,
Shalt own me Mistress of the lives of men
Ere all is ended, mighty Maximus!
Shadows shall swallow thee and all thy fame . . .
Men hate thee e'en as I . . . In grief and pain
Thou shalt repent this insult . . . Then shalt lie
Forgotten, friendless, in a nameless grave . . .
Though high thy head be raised, and many men
Of many Cities shall look on thy face,
Yet none shall envy thee . . . Now hearken thou
Unto the Druids' curses . . . I have done
With empty words . . . My deeds shall now begin,
And thou shalt live to wish thou ne'er wert born!"
She vanished as the vapour of men's breath

[8] Cf. Hutton, *The Tain*, Bks. VI., VII., and *Appendix* E.

On frosty days, which, caught up by the breeze,
Rising dissolves, and on the instant fades . . .
She was and then was not . . . " 'Tis sorcery! "
Cried Theodosius, " Prefect! See'st thou where
The Druids march towards us? Sir, beware!
What do they? God! Their Magic Arts appal . . .
Would we had slain these fiends ere they had time
To practise Wizardry . . . Hark! Their High-Priest
Invokes some curse . . . Bid now our archers shoot! "
Said Maximus, " Peace! Let them speak . . . What
good
Can they gain by it? I am fain to hear
And see this Druid Magic . . . Watch a chance
To circumvent them . . . Andragathius!
Ha! He lies prone . . . He hath o'erstepped the line
That borders safety . . . Yet he is not dead . . .
His eyes have life . . . His horror-stricken face
Shews conscious thought . . . Why! What is this?
My hand is fixed . . . And thine . . . Thine eyeballs
glare . . .
Our stiffened limbs move not . . . We are entranced!
What spell is this? "
The Druid Marven spake :[9]

[9] Cf. E. O'Curry, *Manners and Customs of Anc. Irish*, Vol. II., Pt. I., p. 215, and *Tripartite Life of St. Patrick*, ed. W. Stokes, I. 45, 46, 55, 93, 95, 131, etc.

" My dark grey hornless Bull's Hide hither bring,
And my white-speckled Head-Piece with birds' wings,
And my Druidic Instruments give me!
Lochru! Hand here my Hazel Wand of Might . . .
Moël and Caplait, Id and Hono stand,
Holding my Cloak of Darkness . . . Rechred, thou
And Reon of the Tribe of Foëlan,
The gallant Warrior, take ye your place
On my left hand, your censers slowly swing . . .
Bairchid and Lucatmoël on my right,
Do ye likewise . . . Let the rich fumes arise,
The Smoke-Clouds gather, that shall blind the eyes
Of our relentless foes " . . . Upon his head
Th' Arch-Druid set the Cap with fluttering Wings,
And o'er his shoulders pulled the grey Bull's Hide . .
Then in a mighty roaring voice he cried,
" The Shavings of the Warriors' Spears bring here! . .
The Iron Filings that beneath the Stone
Of the Cromm Cruaich lie in secrecy . . .
For I would Curse these Roman dogs to-day
And blast them for their evil treachery."
They brought him these; they brought him Butter too,
Made from the Milk of the White Sacred Cow,
Wherewith he kneaded th' iron shavings till
He rolled the mass into a greasy ball;

And as he rolled he cried . . .

" O God of Day!
O Light Eternal! In their bitter need
Help now Thy servants . . . Hear them when they plead . . .

I mix a roaring Fire . . . In my wrath and ire[10]
I mix a roaring, mighty, powerful, terrible Fire!
It shall clear the wood . . . Where the trees stood
Shall be naught!
It shall blight the grass where it doth pass,
For 'tis fraught
With the Druids' raging, mighty, powerful, terrible Curse!

It shall be worse than the battle's slaughter,
It shall parch up the streams and dry up the water . . .
The Flame of our Anger that Heavenward goes
Soon, soon shall prove the bane of our foes!

See! The Ball
Of the sharp Iron Filings,
Filled with our Wrath and our fierce Revilings,
As I throw it high, far up in the sky,
Flies 'gainst the wind . . . They shall find
Ere it fall

[10] Cf. E. O'Curry, *Manners and Customs of Anc. Irish*, II., Pt. I., pp. 214-215.

The Fiery Mist and the Curtain of Snow
Shall hide the Sun's Children . . . Woe! Woe! Woe!
To all who wrong the Pict and the Gael . . .
The Romans have scorned us . . . Long they'll bewail
Their folly and shame . . . The weak shall prevail . . .
Those who despised us shall fail . . .

In black Night
Their Sun shall go down,
And their Might
And their Fame and their glorious Name
Be broken for ever . . . Come, Children of Light!
It is time to depart . . . From mortal bonds sever
With cheerful heart . . . As the mist we melt . . .
Let darkness be felt!

Tremble in Terror! Ye Romans, Woe!
We go . . . We go . . .
We dissolve . . . We vanish . . .
Unto our Foe
Woe! Woe for ever! No more . . . No! Never
Shall ye stay our Flight . . . We soar in the air
Through the dark night . . .

Romans, despair! Naught we care . . .
We go . . . We are gone
As the ray of light is lost in the Sun,
As the raindrop falling is merged in the Sea,

We dissolve . . . We vanish . . . We fade . . . We are
free . . .
O Romans! Our Curses, naught else, we leave ye! ''

When chanted were the Words of Wizardry
Then Marven blew a Breath Druidical
Into the sky, and lo! A great black cloud
Covered the earth with darkness . . . It was night . . .
Huge snowflakes fell until men stood snow-cased
Unto their girdles and the horses' girths
Were hidden . . . From the blackness overhead
Flashed the forked lightning! Loud the thunder
crashed! . . .
Then fell a shower of something red as gore
That crimsoned all the snow upon the plain . . .
Men stood thigh deep as though in blood or fire,
And from the Cauldron's mouth arose bright flames
That soared up to the clouds like fierce fire-drakes
That chased each other fighting . . . Slowly rose
A mist from off the earth, above which I
Saw a strange sight . . . A moment seen, then gone . . .
The Druid Marven speeding through the air
On great red wings upborne as though he were
A flying dragon . . . Whirling forms I spied
Flit by enswathed in mist . . . High over all
I saw, O marvellous sight! A ship of dreams,

Most like some monstrous bird with outstretched wings,
Or dragon of the air . . . An awesome thing[11]
That had on either side great silver fans,
With paddles even as a water-wheel
That moved like oars and beat against the wind,
So that the vessel slipped from earth and soared
High o'er us in the sky; and o'er its side
I saw the face of Cormac, the old King,
And other Chieftains' faces staring down . . .
They vanished suddenly . . . Then I saw fall
A fluttering wisp of hay that smote the brow[12]
Of Maximus . . . A voice from out the sky
Cried piercingly, " Take thou the Druids' gift
That doth denote thy fate . . . O Madman! Know
Henceforth unsettled and a wanderer
Shalt thou become! E'en as this withered grass
Is borne at the wind's will, now here now there,
Shalt thou be carried by thy vain desire
Until thou perish, shrivelled as by fire
By vain remorse, in hopeless misery,
At a friend's hands and justly . . . Go thy way,
Leolin's son! The Emperor of a Day! . . .

[11] Cf. Rhys (Sir J.) *Hibbert Lectures*, 2nd Edn., pp. 210-212, The *Roth Ramach* or *Roth Fáil.*

[12] E. O'Curry, II. Pt. I., pp. 203-4.

Hail! Magnus Maximus! O Imperator, Hail!" . . .
The Druids' taunting laughter pealed and rang
In every ear . . . Gaping we stood and stared . . .
Far off the mocking echoes made reply,
"Hail, Maximus! O Emperor of a Day!" . . .
The chanting ceased . . . The laughter died away . . .
The Heavens grew light again, the snow was stayed
And vanished utterly . . . One thing I saw
With a quick gasp of wonder . . . The hill-side,
Where erst was a dense wood, stood bleak and bare,
Smould'ring in places, and the reek thereof
Came to our nostrils . . . It was swept by fire . . .
Naught but a few charred stumps in truth were left
To shew where once this noble wood had been . . .
The very cliff had undergone some change . . .
A landslip marked the path by which we came,
The Northern Avenue lay part concealed
Beneath a mass of fallen earth, and e'en
The hill-crest had receded it, so it seemed.

The mist now fled before the blazing sun
Whose hot rays beat upon us, as still mazed
Men looked at one another . . . We gazed round
In stupid fashion blinking . . . Naught we saw
In the Stone Circle but its gloomy Gods;

Deserted, empty else, save for the dead
Who strewed the ground and our bewildered selves . . .
The Cauldron's lingering flames still smould'ring fumed;
The Druids, the wild Amazons, were gone;
The old King vanished and the Chieftains fled . . .
Though where and how remained a mystery . . .
The sullen crowd without were dazed as we;
Our soldiers had them 'neath their mastery;
Cowed and abashed they waited sulkily . . .

Maximus started as from a deep sleep . . .
He gazed around . . . Then shouted clear and high,
" Sound the Assembly, Buccinators! . . . Blow![13]
Unlink your horses . . . Odd Files, rein ye back
To your half distance . . . All make fast your links . .
Shorten your reins . . . Make ready, men! . . . So . . . Mount!
Handle your slings . . . Sling lances! Poise your shields!
Odd Files, move to the front! . . . So! Smartly now!
Form Ranks! Tell off by Sections . . . Flank men, prove!
So . . . As ye were! The Even Numbers, prove!

[13] Cf. *New Art of War* (1726), p. 197, and *Cavalry Training Manual* (1915).

Take care, the Ala! To the right about!
Forward, march all in order! . . Halt! Keep line! ''

I slipped down when I heard the trumpet call . . .
No soldier tarries when the busines sound,
And I felt shamed that I had lingered thus . . .
I left the maids to follow, and I raced
Towards the Ring . . . Two troopers barred my way,
Seizing mine arms . . . Then laughed immoderately,
'' 'Tis Quintus Lupus, our young Liticen!
What dost thou, comrade, in such foppish gear?
A festal garb, forsooth, and garlanded
As for thy wedding! . . . Lad, where hast thou been? ''
Quoth I right soberly, '' Laugh ye your fill,
I am escaped but narrowly from death . . .
I cannot laugh as yet '' . . . Abashed they gaped,
And mumbled something, but I fled past them
And hastened to my Lord . . . Our Prefect stood,
Having dismounted, at his horse's head,
Holding his friend Count Maurice by the hand.
With loving eyes and friendly grasp those twain
Greeted each other . . . Nor spake much . . . I heard
The Cornish Count say quietly, '' Dear Friend,
I knew that thou wouldst come before the end '' . . .
Said Maximus my Lord and softly spake,

" I thank God, Maurice, I was not too late . . .
Yet 'twas not I who saved thee . . . Heaven willed
Thy life and sent good help to us . . . Where then
Is he who " . . . As he asked I hurrying came
And stood before him mute, saluting him . . .
The Prefect stared and looked me up and down
In some astonishment . . . " So! Thou art safe,
Young Quintus . . . By thy gaudy festal dress,
That but ill matches thy wan woeful face,
I see thou hast been very near to death . . .
I'm glad thou hast escaped, lad . . . See to it
That henceforth thou dost curb thy questing mind!
Thou art too rash and too inquisitive . . .
But I'll not scold thee now . . . Here, drink some wine
From mine own flask . . . Give him a cloak, someone!
Take thou thy belt and bugle, boy, and keep
Close at my side . . . Who are those pale-faced
maids?" . . .
I told him hurriedly . . . Said he, " My maids,
Stand ye beside me here . . . Herenius, thou!
And thou, Heraclius! Have them in your care . . .
Let none molest them . . . He who touches, dies!
What is it now? " He turned to one who ran
In haste to us . . . 'Twas Theodosius
With downcast looks . . " Prefect, I pray thee come . .

Our former comrade Niger asks for thee . . .
He cannot last . . . Death's written on his face " . . .
Said Maurice hastily, " O Maximus,
He gave his life for me . . . And I forgot . . .
Why stand we talking while in mortal pain
That gallant soul lies dying? . . . Let us go." . . .
The Prefect said, " Was this the way he planned
To save thee, Maurice? I knew not his mind,
His generous thought I had not even guessed . . .
Would that he might be spared . . . Perchance his plight
Is not so hopeless? Have we surgeons here? "
Said then Gerontius, "Aye, my Lord! E'en now
Ulpius[14] is with him and Marcellus,[15] who
Use all their science, but they say in vain . . .
No man could stand what he has borne and live " . . .
With sorrow in his heart the Prefect came
To where Petronius lay, supported now
By the two surgeons. O'er his mangled frame
A horseman's cloak was laid. His failing eyes
Roved anxiously, his breath came in quick gasps . . .
He looked up gratefully as my Lord knelt
And took the helpless body in his arms . . .

[14] Cf. Simpson, *Arch. Essays*, II. p. 217, M. Ulpius Sporus, "*Medicus alæ Indianæ et tertiæ Astorum*," Corp. Insc. Lat. XI. 3007.

[15] *Marcellus Empiricus* of Bordeaux. Cf. *Legacy of Rome*, ed. C. Bailey, p. 283.

" What can I do for thee, my Comrade, say?
Speak if thou canst to me . . . See, I am here . . .
I listen, Niger . . . Oh, thou hast done well!
'Tis thou hast saved my friend . . . Not I, not I . . .
And for thy guerdon must thou bear this pain . . .
Die in this torment? . . . Ulpius, is there naught?
Marcellus, does thy science not avail
To save our comrade's life? " . . . They shook their heads . . .
Said Ulpius, " Sir, no surgeon howe'er skilled
May save this man . . . He hath a dagger thrust
That is envenomed 'twixt his ribs, and see,
The chest, how burnt and charred; and his back, Sir,
Is broken in two places . . . He sinks fast " . . .
Said then Petronius weakly, yet he smiled,
Though deadly pale his face and his hands clenched,
" Prefect, moved by some pity Marven struck
To kill me ere he left my side . . . 'Tis best . . .
What! Live a cripple . . . Ne'er to walk again!
'Twere worse than toiling at the galley's oar . . .
I'm glad to go . . . Alas! I have sinned much . . .
'Tis over now . . . Thank God! . . . Give me thy hand
If thou dost think me worthy . . . Ah! Old friend,
Thou dost not know . . Not all . . Not half my crimes . .
I do deserve my heavy punishment,

And more . . Much more . . I dare not tell thee . . Yet
I dare not die till I confess . . . O God!
O God! Give me some drink " . .He lay and gasped . .
Said Maximus, and raised him tenderly,
" Drink, friend! Nor longer vex thy weary soul . . .
Say naught against thy will . . . Yet aught I hear
Will weigh not 'gainst the valiant deed thou'st dared . .
Thy fame shall be restored, thy name revered . . .
Lie in mine arms, old friend, lie still and rest " . . .
Said then the dying man, " I failed thee once
When we two were in Rome . . Oh, hold me close! . .
'Twere terrible to die ere this be told . . .
Raise me up, Maximus . . . So . . . Listen . . . I . . .
I did disgrace myself . . . I diced . . . I drank . . .
Ran after women . . . Was in debt withal . . .
But what of that? Such habits had we all . . .
Thou know'st that well . . . But this thou dost not
know . . .
I was a traitor to the Roman State . . .
It matters not to tell thee how I fell . . .
I led thee on to gamble recklessly . . .
I had grown jealous of thee . . . Why? Sayest thou?
Oh, men told lies and I believed them then . . .
I marked with envy thy quick-growing fame . . .
When I was seized, degraded, and condemned

To worse than death, on thee I thought with hate . . .
I did my best . . . Or worst . . . To ruin thee
By claiming thee accomplice in my crime . . .
It was through me thou wert in exile sent . . .
I told lies to the Emperor and he
Thought I spake truth . . . O Magnus, canst thou now
Forgive my cruel spite . . . My jealousy?
I have tried to atone " . . . Choking, he ceased . . .
The Prefect bent o'er him. " Look up," he said,
" See in mine eyes how fully I forgive . . .
Can I do aught to help thee, friend o' mine,
Ere thou dost leave us? . . . Quick! Marcellus . . .
Wine! "
Petronius drank . . . Revived, he rambling spake,
" My little farmstead in the Alban Hills . . .
Would I might see it . . . With my Livia I
Passed many happy hours there long ago . . .
When we were young . . . My little son . . . 'Twas there
I taught the boy to ride . . . So long ago . . .
I wonder is he dead? My Livia died . . .
Thank God for that! . . She could not bear disgrace . .
I broke her heart . . . It hurts me sore to think . . .
My son . . . Would that I knew " . . . Theodosius said,
Bending down quickly, " Why, Petronius, him
I heard of lately . . . Marcellinus wrote

The other day from Rome and said the boy
Was in the Household of young Gratian
And in high favour . . . Julian, is he not?
Julian Petronius Niger . . . I thought then,
Remembering the name, that it was strange . . .
Though at the time I neither knew nor guessed . . .
I mean " . . . He stammered . . . Then Petronius smiled,
" Knew not I slaved in the same Quinquereme
Whereon ye sailed . . . Is that what thou wouldst say?
Aye! . . . It was strange and passing kind of Fate . . .
I'm glad the boy does well . . . 'Tis a good lad . . .
O Magnus! Hold me up . . . I want to say
Something . . . Something important . . . Warn thee . . .
Look!
Who is that there behind thee? He who scowls . . .
Is it thy foe and mine? . . . He told me lies . . .
Lies . . . Comrade . . . Ah! " . . . Said Maximus,
" Rest, rest!
There are none here but friends . . . Why, they who
stand
Behind me thou know'st well . . . Gerontius, see . . .
Heraclius too . . . None else save my good friend
Count Andragathius . . What now wouldst thou say?
Nay, strive not so . . . Thou art too weak to speak . . .
Lie still, I'll hold thee till the spasm pass " . . .

Petronius groaned, " He stands there . . . He . . . The
wretch
Who did betray us both . . . O Magnus! See,
He . . . He is . . . God! I'm choking . . . Friend . . .
Thy hand . . .
Thy hand . . . Ah! Maximus . . . Hold me! " . . . He
sank
Back in the Prefect's arms, who weeping bent
And kissed the dead man's brow and closed his eyes . . .
Said Theodosius, " He hath made good end,
He is at peace . . . But what meant his strange words?
Who did he say betrayed thee? " Said his friend,
" Why, I know not . . . I think pain racked him so
His tired deluded mind false visions saw . . .
So much he'd borne for many weary years
He was distrustful of his fellow-men . . .
I will not let suspicion vex my soul
As it did his . . . O Theodosius, see,
He looks as when we knew him first, not marred
By cruel grief or torment . . . Not a trace
Of his life's agony shews in his face . . .
I'm glad we were with him in his last hour . . .
He was good comrade once . . . All else shall be
Forgotten in the memory of his death . . .
'Twas a brave end, and may I die as well

When my time comes . . . Gerontius! Bid thy men
Place the dead body of our comrade here
Upon a bier of osier-branches made . . .
We will give him a soldier's funeral;
The honours for a Roman Tribune pay
Unto my friend's now cold and lifeless clay,
That in the World of Shadows he shall know
Maximus loves him still . . . So let us go . . .
Bid ye the trumpets a Dead March to sound!
Then let the Camp be pitched on yon high ground
Far from this evil Ring of Haunted Stones . . .
What, Marius? Is't thou? Welcome, Decurion!
Is that Prince Eochaidh with thee? . . . Greetings, Sir!
I have heard something of thy tale . . . To-night shalt thou
As honoured guest tell more . . . Thy wrongs will we
Redress . . . Meanwhile I welcome thee, fair Lord,
As one who asks aid of Imperial Rome . . .
I, as her officer, grant thy demand . . . So come! . . .
Come, Theodosius! . . . Maurice, come! . . . My friends,
Give me your arms, your hearts I know I hold " . . .

We camped that night on lone Callanish Moor,
And on the morrow searched the place in vain
For any sign of Cormac and his train.

ADVENTURE XIX.

How no trace being left of King Fincomarke or the Druids, Maximus returned laden with booty without mishap to the mouth of the Clyde—How he decided to scale the Rock of Alclwyd, and how, with some trouble, he sought and found a Guide.

For six long days we searched that land in vain;
King Fincomarke had vanished; but we found
Much hidden treasure piled up underground . . .
Beneath the Central Stone of the great Ring
There were two chambers. Forcing our way in
We found large store of gold and precious gems,
And goodly armour with fine silken robes,
All which we seized; and passages we found
That led to other chambers hidden close . . .
The vaulted Hall of which young Marius told,
The prisons and full many a cave and cell
Dug in the rock we searched within, without,
And found more riches than my tongue can tell . . .
Meanwhile my Lord sent orders that the ships
Should sail from Luirbost Loch north round the Isle . .
So up Loch Roag to Callanish Bay
That lieth north in Roag's southern arm,
With a fair wind Aurelius sailed and came
Without mishap to harbour. Then our troops

Embarked in order. First we set on board
Certain great ships and galleys of the Gael
That lay deserted there, such of the folk
Who in our hands remained as prisoners
That Maximus considered were of worth
To sell for slaves in Britain or in Gaul;
The rest he spared and set at liberty,
Though Andragathius fain would have these slain,
Deeming such mercy ill-timed foolishness . . .
Placing aboard these vessels such skilled men
As we could spare, we sailed for southern shores.
As down Loch Roag in the dawn we rowed
With pleasure watched I the huge Standing Stones,
Grim, gaunt, and terrible unto mine eyes,
Recede and vanish in the rolling mist . . .
Scarcely we saw the Loch's low rugged cliffs,
So thick the haze . . . Obscure our perilous way . . .
This Loch is hollowed into bays and creeks,
And narrow channels 'tween a myriad isles,
That much deceive the unwary voyager.
Even Hesperius and the pilots found
It was no easy task to steer to sea,
So intricate the windings of the Loch,
And so securely hidden is its mouth . . .
At last we made the opening and set sail.

With following wind and favourable tide
Far in our wake we left the Hebrides;
And I, for one, felt my heart lighter beat
To see their distant peaks drop one by one
Below the horizon, till naught but the gleam
Of snow-capped Mealashel we saw afar,
A fading glimmer . . . Soon, that too was gone,
And we sailed south by west far from the land,
Judging it best to give the coasts wide berth,
Lest we should fall into a hornet's nest
Among the Islands . . . So in peace we came
South of Kintyre; within three days we made
The mouth of Clyde and t'wards Alclwyd we sailed.
Without mishap we anchored in that bay
Called Gourock by the Picts in the old days.

That night my Lord took counsel . . . He was set
On a rash deed, yet maybe he knew best
What he had in his power to execute . . .
Theodosius made demur . . . He urged delay . . .
I heard him speaking as I stood on guard
By my Lord's orders at the Deck-house door . . .
" To my mind, Prefect, it were best to sail
Past Alclwyd's Rock and reach Dunglas to-night.
We know not who is now in garrison;

We can return in force . . . Why risk men's lives
In such wild hare-brained scheme of devilry?
How can we hope to scale yon beetling crag
I' the dark, the path unknown . . . if such exist,
Which I much doubt? . . . Be guided, Maximus!"
Said Andragathius gruffly, "He is right . . .
There is no profit in this madcap plan . . .
Remember, Sir, thy soldiers are but men,
Not nine-lived cats, four-handed monkeys, that
They should be asked to climb a bare-faced cliff . .
If thou commandest this 'tis at the risk
Of causing mutiny . . . Why, Prefect! Though
Thou offerest all the golden loot thou'st won
Unto the men to make them volunteer,
I wager thou wilt not get even one
To go with thee . . . It is preposterous!
And I've the right to say so, for I'm asked
My frank opinion . . . Take it at its worth . . .
I have thine interest, Sir, so deep at heart
I would not have thee risk thy credit thus" . . .
Said Maximus, and his flushed fiery face
Grew cool again, "Ye speak your minds, my friends,
With all the candour that I could desire . . .
Ye have the right . . . I bade ye criticize
My plan . . . Now listen! I expect to-night,

Ere sunset probably, to meet us here
My kinsman Kenneth, who is better known
Amongst ye all as Lord Cunetha,[1] son
Of Manaw's Chief, Aeternus our good friend,
He who rules in his father Pesrut's stead . . .
Paternus Pesrut, honoured still in Rome,
Padern of the Red Mantle, who was given
The proud Paludamentum[2] as a sign
That he was made Imperial General " . . .
Said Theodosius, " Oh, we know him well . . .
Why comes he, Sir . . . If I'm allowed to ask? "
Said Maximus, " I saw him ere we sailed
And bade him keep his keen eye on Alclwyd . . .
Our House has some old claim upon the place[3] . . .
I knew he would watch well. From him we'll learn
Who guards the fort for Eugen, how bestowed
And how well furnished is its garrison . . .
Reserve decision, Sirs, till he be heard . . .
Hark! Hear ye not the splash of oars? . . . 'Tis he,
And to his time . . . I'll swear 'tis he who comes! "

[1] Cunedda. Cf. Edw. Lloyd, Hist. Wales I. p. 100, 118; *Cymmrodor* (Welsh Genealogies), *Harleian MS. 3859*, Ped. I, and Nicholson, Dynasty of Cunedag (Cymm. XXI.).

[2] Roman General's military cloak.

[3] Cf. Skene, *Celtic Scotland*, I. p. 235-6, III. p. 103, and *Four Anc. Bks. of Wales*, I. ch. 10.

Cunetha came . . . A young man lithe of limb,
In pride of youth and strength . . . Ye know him now
In his old age . . . A mighty Chief and King,
A Door of Strength unto his countrymen,[3A]
Renowned in battle, sage in counsel, he
Goes ringed by his tall sons . . . Fourteen had he,
Of whom all live but Tybiawn[4] his heir,
Killed long ago in Wales, whose gallant boy
Prince Meirion is now the King's delight,
The prop of his old age . . . Well, in those days
Cunetha had no cares of married life,
No troubles of the Kingship or of State . . .
He was a lad about young Meirion's age,
His curly yellow locks thick ringed his head,
His eyes swift-darting gleamed a steely blue,
His garb was ermined and his spurs were gold,[5]
His tunic was of a deep purple-blue,[6]
Fivefolded with a border red and gold,
Athwart his broad breast held by gilded brooch
With graven signs. His cloak white-hooded was
With flaming scarlet edged, and this white hood

[3A] Cf. Rhys, *H. L.* 2nd Ed., p. 270 ; Skene, Four Anc. Bks., II. 201.

[4] Tiberius, or Tiberianus.

[5] Cf. Aneurin, ed. Stephens, *Gododin*, p. 141 (*Owen*).

[6] E. Hull, *Cuchullin Saga*, p. 276-7 (*The Phantom Chariot of Cuchullin*).

Was interwoven with bright silver threads . . .
His boots were of tough cowskin dyed dark red . .
He wore no armour, but his jewelled belt
Upheld a mighty golden-hilted sword.
Upon his back, suspended by broad guige,
His purple-painted shield hung, silver-rimmed,
And chased thereon were beasts in bronze and gold.
Upon his head, as he flung back his hood,
I saw a circlet made of fine white bronze,
With sapphires decked, that held his curly locks
From falling o'er his face . . . In his right hand
He grasped an ashwood spear . . . Smiling he strode,
Saluted Maximus, and stood at ease,
Shifting his spear from right hand to the left . . .
The Prefect, springing to his feet, exclaimed,
" Welcome, Cunetha! Prompt and to thy time! "
The twain grasped hands . . . One brought them sparkling wine . . .
They drank together . . . Then said Maximus,
" Thy news, my Cousin, ere I tell thee mine " . . .
The Cymric Prince spake in the Latin tongue,
" Lord, welcome back again! I see sit there
The token of thy triumph . . . Maurice, Hail!
Thy Father will rejoice to know thee safe,
He hath grieved much . . . Thy pardon, Sir, that I

Delay . . . My news is none too good . . . We heard
That thou wert drowned or slain; we feared it true
When from thee came no word . . . Ten days ago
My scouts brought word that the great Castle Hall
Of high Alclwyd was lit up with the glow
Of torches, battlements ablaze with flares,
And every loophole in the place shewed light.
They heard sound of gay feasting, merry songs
Floating adown the river all night long . . .
Next day we learnt King Eugen had come home,
His brother Achay with him . . . Him ye call
Ethodius " . . . Cried Theodosius, " Nay, nay!
Cunetha! Surely thou art misinformed . . .
'Tis just ten days ago we saw the twain;
We saw King Eugen and his brother stand
On Leog's Isle within the Belt of Stones . . .
We saw them carried up into the air,
But surely even witchcraft could not bring
Mortals so swiftly here? " The Brython stared,
Somewhat annoyed . . . " I speak the truth," he said,
" Tribune, thou canst see Eugen for thyself
An thou wilt scale yon Castle's rocky wall . . .
As for his means of coming I know not . . .
No war-galleys of his sailed up the Clyde . . .
But mine own eyes have seen him in the Town,

Aye, and his brother whom I know quite well,
And that was nine days since " . . . Said Maximus,
" How now, Theodosius! 'Tis a challenge, Sir!
Now must thou climb with me to prove the truth
Of this dark saying . . . Nay, good Cousin! We
Doubt not thy word . . Yet thou mayst be deceived . .
It may be someone taketh Eugen's place "—
" And personates young Achay too, my Lord? "
Said then Cunetha laughing, " Why should they? "
Said Maximus, " I know not, but I know
I mean to solve this riddle speedily . . .
Useless it were to fling men's lives away . . .
This Rock, as we all know, cannot be ta'en
By open escalade . . . No rush to storm
Its heights can e'er succeed . . . 'Twere futile waste
Of Rome's brave soldiers that I'll countenance not . . .
Nor have we time nor means to starve them out . . .
How hope blockade the Clyde? No, Sirs! But I
Will find a way before to-morrow night
To reach the topmost of those pinnacles! . . .
Dismiss the Council! Friends, no more this eve . . .
Quintus! Sound thou the welcome supper-call!
Kenneth, dear Cousin! Now shalt thou hear all
Our venturous doings in the Western Isles . . .
How in the saving of one friend I lost

Another, newly found after long years . . .
Alas! A tragic tale . . . Come, lad, with me
Apart . . . I'll tell thee all " . . .

They feasted long . . .
But late that night and all next morn
My Lord was very busy . . . His whole mind was set
To find out one who knew the country-side . . .
He privily enquired throughout those coasts
As to where such might by some chance be found.
Rather than that his bold design should fail
I saw he would try any venturous plan
However desperate the jeopardy;
Nor would he spare those who dared cross his will,
For ever he was wrathful if opposed.
But all the natives whom we brought to him . . .
Though some were bold and hardy, and besides,
Greedy to win the promised guerison,
Which was a large one . . . one and all denied
There was a secret way, or any chance
Of creeping up the cliff-face privily,
Or indeed openly . . . " It can't be done,"
Said one old fellow, sighing as he eyed
The bags of gold, the jewels high up-piled,
The Prefect pushed towards him . . . " Sir, I tried

Long years ago to scale those crags in fun . . .
I was a bird-catcher for climbing famed . . .
'Twas a boy's bet . . . I found ere long I hung
Twixt air and water, then I fell headlong
Into the Sound, from which I crept forth drenched,
Nigh dead, choked with the Leven's clammy slime . . .
I tried a hundred ways, for I was shamed . . .
'Twas not for want of trying Dougal failed,
As ye, or any who essay, will fail . . .
I lost my money, nigh my life as well . . .
I tell thee, Sir, it is impossible . . .
And Dougal was good climber in his day . . .
Yet I have heard," he mumbled, " there was one
Who told me somewhat . . . But 'twas foolishness . . .
And I've forgotten what the callant's name,
Nor do I know if he be live or dead " . . .
He stood there blinking, wandering in the past . . .
" What hast thou heard? " said quickly Maximus,
" Refresh thy memory, old man! Speak out,
And thou shalt have this bag of gold . . . Stay dumb,
And I must take swift means to aid thy tongue . . .
Marcus! Bid Rufo bring the rods and cords
That I warned thee to have in readiness . . .
Ah! That is better . . . Fear not, tell me all . . .
No matter if it help not . . . I will pay
If thou art honest with me " . . . Said the man,

" Lord, spare me! I am old . . . I do forget . . .
But some years since I lighted on a man
Who told me he had scaled yon Rock and walls . . .
I think he lied "—" His name! " cried Maximus,
" Tell me when didst thou see him last, and where?
Quick, fellow, speak . . Or I will have thee scourged! . .
Nay . . . Take thy time," he said, for the old man
Began to tremble so scarce might he stand,
" I meant not thus to fluster thee, old fool!
But thou dost sorely try my patience . . . Come,"
Said he more kindly, " Who on earth was he
Who climbed where thou didst fail?" Dougal replied,
" Lord, I remember me . . . He was a man
Serving aboard the Fleet . . . A thick-set man . . .
No Roman, but half Roman . . . I think, Pict . . .
His name escapes me . . . He has gone long since . . .
I have not seen him for a weary while . . .
May I be going, Sir? I know no more . . .
I'm old and feeble, wilt thou let me go? "
Said Maximus right gravely, " Think, man! Think!
Thy life depends on it . . . Marcus! The straps!
Rufo! Bind me this rascal! We must try
What harsher methods do as kindness fails . . .
Strip him! " . . . The old man's hopeless frightened eyes
Looked up at Maximus in piteous wise;

Then wandered from his stern relentless face
Towards the open door of the deck-house . . .
As Rufo roughly dragged his jerkin off
He suddenly shrieked out, " Lord ! Lord ! He's there . .
That is the man ! Oh, spare me ! . . . Let me go ! "
Maximus looked up quickly and saw where
Herenius passed the doorway . . . " Ha ! " he cried,
" The very man to aid me in my need . . .
If thou speak'st truth, old man, thou shalt go free
And well rewarded . . . Ho ! Proreta, there !
A word with thee ! " . . . Herenius, hearing, came,
Gravely saluted ; then his wondering eyes
Turned on the dishevelled wretch who still stood there,
His shoulders bared, and sore discomfited . . .
" Knowst thou that man ? " asked chafing Maximus.
" Aye, Sir ! I well remember him . . . 'Twas said
that he
Was the best climber after sea-birds' eggs
In all Alclwyd . . . I'm sorry he doth lie
'Neath thy displeasure, Prefect . . . He is old "—
" And I am merciless, wouldst thou now say ? "
Said Maximus and laughed . . . " Maybe I am,
Even as thou, Proreta, sure had proved
If thwarted as I've been all this long morn . . .
Herenius ! Tell me, speaks this dodderer sooth
When he declares that thou dost know a path
Up yonder precipice ? . . . Some secret way ? "

Said then Herenius startled, " Why, my Lord,
I knew one once . . . Wouldst thou then gang that gait?
O Sir, I knew not what was in thy mind
Or I had told thee of it " . . . Said my Lord,
" Marcus! Give that old simpleton his gold,
And add a flask of wine . . . So! Get thee gone! . . .
Rufo, dismiss! Quintus, stay thou and guard
The cabin door . . . Keep it fast closed 'gainst all . . .
Now speak, Herenius! " The Proreta spake . . .
A strong and skilful, wise and kindly man
Was this brave seaman ever found to be,
Though somewhat rough and harsh he might appear
To those who judge men by their courtliness . . .
" I see, Sir, thou dost seek some jeopardy,[7]
Some stratagem . . . Wouldst thou be blithe if I
Could shew thee in good truth a certain way
To scale yon cliff? " Said Maximus, " Say on!
Thou hast guessed mine intent " . . . Herenius said,
" Certès! I'll undertake as service due
To shew thee now how thou mayst make essay
With a few picked men in thy company . . .
And I'll be foremost, Prefect, of ye all . . .
We'll want a ladder, that can I prepare . . .

[7] Cf. Barbour, *The Bruce*, ed. Mackenzie, Book X., 360, etc. (*Taking of Roxburgh*) Book X. 514, etc. (*Taking of Edinburgh Castle*). Also cf. Tytler, *Hist. Scotland*, VII. 288-290, Buchanan, *Scot. Hist.* Bk. XX., 28-32, Beattie, *Scotland*, II. 124-126 (*Taking of Dumbarton Castle*).

I trow about twelve feet, no less, no more . . .
So we may at the last surmount the wall
All quietly, and none the wiser, Sir."
Said Maximus, " That's right good hearing, friend . .
But tell me how and when thou learn'st the way? "—
" If thou wouldst know, Sir, it is briefly told . . .
When I was a young lad in days gone by
I served aboard a bireme on the Clyde
Whose crew had in its turn to mount the Guard
On yonder dreary Rock . . . 'Twas at the time
When it was held by Rome, not by the Scot . . .
Well, I was some deal flighty in those days
And over-venturesome . . . I loved a wench,
Or thought I did, who lived down in the Town.
That I without suspicion might contrive
To meet her privily whene'er I chose,
I made me a rope-ladder, therewith I
Slid boldly o'er the wall, for I had spied
A narrow cleft that led down the cliff's face . . .
A water-gulley may be . . . Down I came,
And found it none so hard as I had feared,
So fared unto the Town, though I must swim
The channel where the Leven joins the Clyde . . .
But I was very nimble, lithe and trim
In those days, Sir . . . Then when it grew nigh dawn
I left my lass and climbed the cliff again . . .

A hard task, but I did it; and oft-times
Went and returned at will by the same way . . .
Nor was I missed, for I chose well mine hour
And ever came in without being seen;
Though dripping wet and tired, right pleased I ween . .
Yet well I knew were I caught at that game
Short were my shrift, and sure soon had I hung
Dangling from the high battlements . . . Long time
I used this method in my travelling
So that I grew to know right well the road
However dark the night, and e'en blindfold
I would have dared the passage . . . Love is hot,
And I was very young, Sir . . . Now thou know'st
Enough to break me, if thou choose, but I
Trust thou wilt keep this from my Captain's ears . . .
Aurelius has but scanty patience, Sir,
And in such matters he is strict and stern . . .
Though it is long ago he would think fit
To punish me for breach of discipline " . .
Said Maximus, " Fear not thy Captain's wrath;
Thou shalt shew me thy lover's path, my friend,
This very night, nor miss thy due reward." . . .
Quoth then Herenius, " Sir, if thou dost think
Thou wilt essay to tread this path with me,
Upon the wall I'll bring thee without fail;
And, if it may be that God keeps us hid

From those who watch upon the ramparts . . . If
We get fair chance to set our ladder up . . .
Why, then, Sir, if but one mounts on the wall . . .
Well, he can sure defend himself at need
Till the remainder swarm up after him! ''
I saw the Prefect smile in cheerful wise
To hear Herenius speak so eagerly . . .
'' What dost thou ask, Proreta, for thy pains?
I will not stint thee, man, if we succeed,
But gold and jewels shalt thou have at will '' . . .
Said then Herenius, and his eyes grew keen
And hungry as he thought on his desire,
'' Prefect, I've waited many weary years,
Nor might I wed with her I long have loved,
For we were poor . . . I have naught but my pay,
Nor could I get me leave to take a wife . . .
Give me that leave and such gold as thou wilt,
So will I wed my little lass at last . . .
My little Ethne, treasure of my heart,
Who for my sake has borne much shame and blame '' . .
Said Maximus and smiled . . . '' 'Tis granted thee . . .
And for thine Ethne take this emerald,
That it may shew I hold her in esteem . . .
Nor shall ye twain henceforth be lacking gold . .
Go make thy ladder soon and privily . . .
Speak thou to none of this . . . Can it be done

Before to-night? '' Herenius nodded, "Aye!
I have the means thereto, for we have ropes
Used in the rigging that shall partly serve;
The rest I will contrive with Dougal's help . . .
He is a silent fellow, Sir . . . I'll see
He is kept close . . . He is well-skilled and knows
How to make ladders, binding wood with ropes
That naught shall break yet all be flexible . . .
And it must have two hooks, therewith a clutch
Of good strong iron to clamp it to the wall
And safely in the crevices to catch . . .
There is an angle that I always used
Behind a bastion, where the crook up-flung
Shall in a crenellation firmly hold;
Then, when it is stretched out, Sir, thou shalt find
It will hang safely . . . 'Twill take us some hours . . .
Sir, by thy leave I go '' . . . He passed without,
And Maximus, still smiling, well content,
Bade me call thither to a Council all
The Officers who served 'neath his command.
Whereat I blew the call for " Principals,"[8]
Three times repeated through the Quinquereme,
Till from the Triremes and the Acatons
The Officers had gathered every one,
Even Herenius answering that call.

[8] Commissioned Officers.

ADVENTURE XX.

How Maximus and his men scaled the Rock of Alclwyd.

They came, they heard. . . . Quoth Maximus, " Fair
Sirs!
Which of ye will attempt this deed with me? "
Ere any could reply swiftly uprose
Count Andragathius. With gloomy face he spake
In jealous doubtful mood, " Why, Prefect, Why!
This is a marvellous venture, on my faith!
And how know we that after all these years
Herenius doth remember well his way?
I like not rashness " . . . Whereat some there laughed,
Knowing the Scythian's hasty temperament,
But cried Herenius fierily, " Lord Count!
Though thou believ'st me not, yet shalt thou see
That I myself will be the first of ye
To scale yon cliff that I, at least, fear not . . .
Sirs, follow me, and by my soul I swear
I'll make ye masters of Alclwyd's strong Rock,
But if your hearts fail ye, let it alone " . . .
Said Maximus, " Well said, Proreta! . . . Come,
Good friends! Will ye now venture? Or shall we
Be called faint-hearted? Are we frightened girls,
Afraid of falling, scared by a dark night?
Or Roman soldiers, hardy, skilled and bold?

By God! Herenius, thou and I will fare
Aloft to-night alone if none else dare!
Yet I know well that no man here will fail . . .
Comrades, once more I ask who goes with me"
To which they answered, "All!" But he said, "Nay!
We will cast lots. Too many here are we" . . .
Then on twelve officers the lot did fall,
Of whom Count Maurice was the first man called,
Cunetha and Prince Eochaidh were next named . . .
Theodosius was the fourth and Geraint fifth;
Publius and Marius heard their names with joy;
Heraclius, also Gracian Municeps . . .
A Briton born of noble line was he,
And wealthy citizen of London Town . . .
Tenth, one named Graeme, a dark, grim, silent man,
Reserved and gloomy, but for courage famed . . .
Terence the Thracian, and the Scythian Goth
Count Andragathius, were the eleventh and twelfth . .
All were brave, hardy, strong and skilful men . . .

Now at the Prefect's nod Herenius ran
To make his scaling-ladder. While he worked
Our General reviewed the troops and called
For volunteers, for thirty hale young men
Well used to climb . . . From hundreds came the cry

" We all are willing, Prefect! Take us all! "
Then as before the men were picked by lot . . .
Five of them sailors from the Quinquereme,
The rest were horsemen of th' Asturians,
And some Sixth Legionaries . . . Stalwart men,
Well-trained and agile fellows all of them . . .
I sulked apart . . . My name had not appeared . . .
But, as I stood thus drearily, I felt
A firm hand grip my shoulder . . . Said my Lord,
" Why stand'st thou moping, Quintus? Wilt thou try
This venture with us? Surely thou, my lad,
Hast expert knowledge of a quick way down,
If not the best way up a crag like this? . . .
Yet thou art somewhat young and foolhardy . . .
Perhaps wert best on board " . . . Said I, " My Lord!
Try me this time, nor fear that I shall fail . . .
Thou'lt want a Bugler . . . Prefect! Let me come! "
He smiled and said, " So be it " . . . But his face
Grew grave as he to Marius turned, " Why, Sir?
Dost thou think this a fitting time to test
Thy new-gained strength? Certès! Thou must not go!
Let now another take thy place, my lad . . .
Thou art not in good trim for such rough work."
Cried Marius hotly, " Sir! Thou promised'st me
That the next venture I should share with thee,

And I am chosen too by lot that none
May alter, lest a curse fall on us all . . .
I am quite healed . . . Am used to climbing, Sir . . .
I've scaled the walls of many a leaguered town . . .
Prefect, deny me not! By all the Gods!
I'll not bear this rejection . . . Thou dost know
What Roman honour would demand of me
If I go not " . . . His eyes gleamed fierce and bright . . .
The Prefect read his mind . . " Lad, thou shalt come . .
Though if thy strength fail thou dost risk more lives
Than one, remember . . . And mine honour too . . .
For I am pledged to win Alclwyd to-night " . . .
Said Marius, " I'll not fail, Sir " . . . O'er his face
I thought I saw slight shadow as of doubt
A moment stirring, then it cleared, and he
Was laughing merrily enough as all
Pledged in white foaming wine of Syracuse
Our gallant Prefect . . . " Hail, Our Maximus!
Long life to thee! Success and Victory
To-night and ever! . . . All hail, General! "

Then without more ado the Prefect bade
Those who went with him to go lightly armed,
And o'er their loricas dark frocks to throw . . .
Black tunics of coarse linen . . . In the boat

We dropped in silence, and with muffled oars
Pulled up-stream on the swift incoming tide
That now was near the full . . . The night was clear
And many stars shone out, but to our joy
All suddenly the bright sky overhead
Was overcast with a swift rising mist
That veiled the risen moon and hid the stars . . .
The river lay in shadow, and the Rock
Whereon the Castle stood had its high head
Wrapt in dense darkness that the Guards above
Could see naught of the doings down below . . .
But, seasonably as had come this mist,
Yet we escaped not a sharp pinching scare . . .
Aye! Two impediments now marred our plan,
As ye shall shortly hear . . .
Soon were we come
Unseen, unheard, to the crag, rising sheer . . .
Five hundred feet and sixty I have heard
Its awful height . . . It towered far o'er our heads:
A threat'ning mass of basalt bare and drear,
Its upper parts of loadstone firm compact
That if 'tis broken like to sulphur smells . . .
Wherefore folk say the Devil brought this Rock
And set it here long since to guard the Clyde . . .
We looked in wonder at its mighty bulk,

Of which we saw but the steep southern face,
Nor might we see its summit; scarce its base
Was dimly visible. It stood, we knew,
An Island at high tide, washed by the floods
Of Clyde and Leven; in its rear a marsh
Stretched far and wide, while to the West
Loch Lomond lay, a great arm of the sea . . .
Thus was the Rock deemed nigh impregnable . . .
We skirted round it very cautiously;
The Lower Castle, or the Barbican,
Lay just before us, and we had no mind
To rouse the sentries who no doubt kept watch . . .
Herenius steered our scapha with great skill;
Our sweeps were muffled that they should not creak.
Unmarked we floated by the frowning face
Of dark Alclwyd, past both the pinnacles,
Towards its eastern bluff, then crept in-shore
To where the reedy marshland's hidden bank
Borders the fosse or channel of the Rock.
Here was the base but guarded by a tower,
A turret set upon an outlying spur.
A lantern flickered in the turret-top,
Beneath it lay a tiny strip of beach
Across which flowed a broad and muddy stream.
" Here must we land, there is none other place,"

Whispered Herenius, steering in to shore.
Said Maximus unto his right-hand man . . .
'Twas Theodosius as I recollect,
For Graeme the Cumbrian ever on his left
Kept close and guarded him with his own shield,
While I crouched down between them hands on knees . .
" To-night we shall outdo that famous feat . . .
Our fathers' story of the Capitol . . .
Cominus, was it not, who climbed that Rock? "[1]
Theodosius chuckled as he whispered back,
" Yes, and the proud Numidian Fortress too[2] . . .
Ere Carthage fell was not Megara won
By wily stratagem at dead o' night?
A few men crawled on planks from tower to wall,
So won the Gate, an I remember right " . . .
Cunetha, bending forward, spake some words
Within his cousin's ear, and pointed up . . .
Then whispered Maximus, " Fear nothing, friends . . .
Cunetha tells me they keep careless ward,
Feasting to-night in false security . . .
Eugen expects us not . . . Those battlements
The night hides from us are but ill supplied
With catapults, balistae and such gear;

[1] (Pontius Cominus). Cf. Liddell, *Hist. Rome* (*rev.* Benecke), p. 137.

[2] Cf. Liddell, p. 441.

The platforms Count Theodosius built now lie
Neglected, empty of the gyns of war . . .
Not here our danger . . . Our foe is this rock . . .
Surmounted, we shall find right sumptuous fare
To recompense us for our breathless climb ''—
" An uphill march! " muttered Heraclius,
Casting his eye up the steep wall-like rock.
One of the men said low down, "Aye, Sir! True . . .
And if half-way one makes a quick descent? "
Another, laughing low, spake jestingly . . .
" Promotion and a pension . . . That of course."
Young Terence, grinning, spake, " Yes, yes, my man!
Promotion to the next world . . . For thy corse
Funeral expenses, an it can be traced! ''—
A sailor laughed, " Why, man, what fearest thou?
'Tis a few hundred feet, not more . . To break our fall
There are some notches, doubtless, and I trow
We can climb up again quite easily " . . .
I heard a voice that murmured doubtfully,
" Tell that unto the eagles, Petrus . . . No!
To gain that crest a man doth need methinks
An eagle's wings or else a crab's strong claws " . . .
They peered up anxiously as though to gauge
The height of the great cliff that soared aloft
So far above, its summit lost to sight

In the thick darkness of that murky night,
And whispering to each other, shook their heads . . .
Surely it was a rash foolhardy deed,
And in great peril should we place ourselves
If we should try to clamber up that cliff . . .
I trow, if those there had more clearly seen,
Though they were bold and daring, agile men,
Yet had they all refused to take that road,
So steep and perilous had it appeared
By light of day . . . But the murk misty night
Hid from our eyes that awful precipice . . .
" Come now, my men! " said softly Maximus,
Observing that they scanned too curiously
The frowning shadows of the mighty Rock,
" Know ye not that King Eugen, my dear friend,
And his fair Queen shall see us all to sup
With them to-night? I'm sure he will be fain
To give us Romans hospitality . . .
He said as much when I last met with him . . .
Let us make haste to taste friend Eugen's cheer . . .
We'll be in time to add spice to his soup! "—
" Pity! " Theodosius said, " the way to mess
Is not a trifle smoother, Maximus! . . .
But never mind! Guests who have come so far
And climbed so high will find they have amends . . .

They'll gain good appetites in the ascent! " . . .
As we drew near the beach said Maximus,
" Silence! My men, and not a syllable
Until we reach the summit . . . Thus I land
On Alclwyd's Isle and in the Emperors' Names
I bid ye follow me " . . . He stepped ashore . . .
No sooner had we landed cautiously,
Mooring the scapha in a hidden creek
Between the rocks, than singly in a row
Upon our hands and feet we 'gan to creep
Up from the beach across a little mead . . .
Covered in places with coarse tufted grass . . .
So bade Herenius . . . For needs must we pass
Beneath the turret whence the lantern gleamed
That cast a ray of light athwart our path . . .
'Twas here we met our first impediment . . .
The muddy brook that wandered o'er the mead
Was crossed by a frail bridge that rotten shewed,
Unused for a long time. Quite broken down
Some timbers were, and others all displaced.
This caused delay, for we must hurriedly
Renew this ancient bridge as best we might
Without a sound . . . No simple task or light . . .
There in the darkness crouching down we worked
To push two beams across; then, as we crawled

In single file athwart the marshy stream,
We saw before us in the misty fen
A sudden fire break out, and we knew not
What this might mean . . . Count Andragathius swore,
" By all the Flames of Dis see ye not where
Our foes light beacons? They would trap us all . . .
Shall we not charge them, Prefect? Better die
Here in the open fighting than lie bound
In Eugen's rock-hewn dungeons 'neath the stream,
To starve to death in darkness so profound
We should not see the slime that choked our breath " . .
Said Maximus, " Nay, Sir! Not so . . . Geraint!
And thou, Terentius! . . . Spy ye on this fire
And make report . . . Let all the rest lie low! "
But when our scouts returned they said 'twas naught,
Nor could we now see sign of fire nor light . . .
Said Theodosius in an undertone,
" It is an *ignis fatuus* that oft
O'er marshy ground will kindle in the air,
Then lighting on the earth will vanish straight
As though it had not been, and yet again
Will leap and dance like meteor through the air " . . .
Said Gracian Municeps, " Lord, that may be . . .
Yet rather think I 'tis the Foul Fiend's ruse
To lure us to our ruin . . . For, see ye,

These are the Devil's Lanterns rightly called . . .
Oft have I seen them in our London Fens . . .
They bode ill-luck '' . . . Said Maximus, " Peace, Sirs!
Forget ye thus mine orders? Silence all!
What if the Arch-Fiend light us? We will go
More confidently on . . . Doth it not shew
He owns our mastery and meekly serves
As Torch-bearer unto his conquerors? ''
At this we all took heart of grace and laughed
Beneath our breath, so crept upon our way . . .

We saw the shadowy forms of those who watched
Upon the battlements . . . But we crawled on,
Our black frocks hiding any glint of steel
From our mail loricas . . . As oxen we[3]
Moved slowly o'er the meadow one by one,
Staying a while as though to sleep or graze,
Then passing leisurely but surely on . . .
One of the men who lay upon the wall
Bent o'er the parapet and laughed aloud,
" Why, seest thou, Fearchar, how that lazy herd
Gillecomghain hath left his cattle out!
There goes his piebald bull amongst the cows '' . . .
But he mistook the spotted leopard-skin

[3] Cf. Barbour, *The Bruce*, X. 380 (Roxburgh Castle).

That our Aquilifer wore o'er his helm
For the bull's head . . . We heard him say with scorn,
" No doubt he's merrymaking in the Town,
I saw him cross quite late this afternoon . . .
He's drunk by now and missed his passage back " . . .
The other said, laughing maliciously,
" 'Twould serve him right if that curst Maximus
Should seize his kine "—" Not likely, Conn my man;
All's quiet at Dunglas . . . Hast thou not heard
The Roman Prefect tarries in the North,
Where he on some fool's journey lately sailed . . .
Tarla told me . . . He of King Cormac's Guard,
Who was sent here to serve young King Eugen . . .
That he will have his hands full very soon,
Nor find it easy to fight his way back
Past Heirgust's fleet . . . They wait in the Great Minch
To trap him " . . . Conn replied, " Is't so indeed?
And what of the Ard-Righ? Fearchar, is't true
That he lies dying? "—" Dead three days ago,"
Quoth Fearchar grimly, " Wounded sore was he,
Though he disguised it, by some Roman's hand
Who shot an arrow at a venture . . . Aye!
Men thought the old King was invulnerable;
'Tis clear he was but mortal e'en as we " . . .
Said Conn, "Alas! Alas! Who shall succeed

The mighty Cormac Finn? " Quoth then his mate,
" Why, who but Eugen, fool, his lawful heir? "—
" Heirgust the Pict," said Conn, " has equal claim . .
He loves not Eugen . . . I see sword and flame
Sweeping our Alban valleys . . . Woe on us! . . .
Come, Fearchar! It is time to leave this ward . . .
Naught lieth there save Gillecomghain's kine " . . .
Talking, they went their ways, but Maximus
Had paid heed to their words.
Then blithely we
Came o'er that meadow unto the Rock's foot,
And now the night was black as corbie's throat . . .
Herenius cast the ladder up the cliff . . .
So steady was his hand, so true his eye,
The crook thereof caught on a knob of rock
As he intended, and the hooks held tight . . .
The wooden bars the rope extended kept
Nor seemed there aught amiss . . . Without delay
Our guide climbed deftly up the swaying rungs;
Maximus followed, and so one by one
We made that jeopardous and strange essay.
So murk the darkness of that gloomy night
It hid from us the terrible abyss
O'er which we soon were hanging . . . For our path . . .
If one could call by such pretentious name

The tiny ledge on which we now must crawl . . .
No ladder served us here . . . went slanting up
And ever up, until at last we seemed
Suspended on a thread 'twixt Heaven and Earth . .
Or was it now the river underneath,
The lapping of whose waves about the cliff
Like distant thunder rolled up to our ears?
We knew naught, thought of naught . . . But steadily
Followed our guide, who nimbly clambered up,
Ever before us, into crevices
And crannies of the Rock . . . With mickle pain
And inward groaning one by one we crept
Now here, now there . . . First up, then down a bit . . .
Now clinging to a notch in the cliff-face,
Then swarming up some slippery pinnacle
Behind him. He, for his part, boldly went
As one who knew that hesitation meant
The death of all . . . He never seemed in doubt,
Ever his face was upwards turned, till we
Were come about the middle of the Rock, so I
Heard someone mutter . . Here there seemed no way . .
The mighty cliff soared sheer above our heads,
Smooth as a sheet of ice . . . Yet in one place
There was a heap of rubble on the ledge
Where by some chance an ash-tree had ta'en root . . .

A great tree and an old . . . Herenius tossed
His ladder up and once again it held,
Hanging securely hooked . . . He tested it,
Then sprang aloft, and some of us climbed too,
So gained a higher ledge, from which we dropped
Ropes to our fellows and thus hauled them up.
Then, faring on with cautious feet, we found
The track we followed but a slender ridge
On which scarce might we stand, by no means stoop . . .
I think the Prefect stumbled here . . . I saw
Graeme's hand shoot out and grip his arm,
So hold him fast, till he regained his feet
And thanked the Cumbrian with a friendly nod . . .
Long the Proreta led us boldly on,
Treading that narrow path with ease . . . At length,
His hand upon the Prefect's shoulder, gave
The signal for a halt . . . We'd reached a ledge
Just broad and long enough for us to sit,
Or lie, on the rough surface of the rock.
Above us still the naked crag rose sheer
With ne'er a notch or knob to give foothold;
Nor saw I any way out from this place
Except a fissure like a chimney that,
Deep cut within the basalt rock, loomed up
Above our heads. Till then no breeze had stirred

The quiet night, but now a wind arose
That chilled us to the bone. From rack of clouds
The moon shone fitfully . . . We were right glad
To sit there panting . . . We were out of breath
And very weary, none of us dare speak . . .
Herenius shewed us by expressive signs
That just above the runnel in the cliff,
Which was a dried-up water-course, there stood
The battered[4] base of the great outer wall.
He muttered in gruff whisper, " Lie ye still!
I hear the Check-Watch who inspect the Guard . . .
They are assembled just above our heads,
But in this rising wind they will hear naught
If ye stir not " . . . We crouched in silent dread . . .
Now help us God in this our pressing need!
Our lives in sooth were hanging by a thread,
And ne'er in greater peril could we be
Than in this anxious moment of suspense . . .
For if they saw us or suspected aught,
How should we any of us 'scape unslain?
They would ding stones down on us from above
And dash us thus to death; nor could we then
Prevent their malice nor aught help ourselves . . .
But now in mercy the moon hid her face . . .

[4] sloping.

Perchance Kerridwen slept . . . And wondrous murk
The blackness all around . . . They saw us not . . .
And yet why stood they muttering up there?
Did they scent jeopardy on the night air?
We knew not . . . Then, by some strange impulse urged,
One of the Watch swopped down a heavy stone,
Crying, "Away! I see ye well, ye swine!"
The stone came hurtling down, just missed the head
Of Andragathius who sat near the edge . . . So passed
And fell from ledge to ledge and bumping crashed
Till with faint splash it reached the stream below . . .
We held our breath, as still as listening mice,
Lurking there privily . . . Nor knew we yet
Whether the man had seen us, or if he
Had thrown in joke, or on the passing chance
Of hitting bird or rabbit . . . For a space
Those up above were silent as though they
Listened intently. We sat very still
And scarcely dare we breathe . . . Now faintly came
The voice of him who threw the stone . . . Quoth he,
"I thought I had that coney . . . Plague take them!
They're ever scrambling on that ledge down there
As though 'twere folk a-climbing . . . Rory, man!
Dost thou hear aught?"—"Nay, Donal! Naught is
there . . .

I hear but this vile pestilential wind
That whistles drearily . . . 'Tis cursèd cold . . .
Get we the rounds done quickly, so find time
To drink young Eugen's health in his good wine . . .
They say to-morrow he shall be Ard-Righ . . .
Raised high upon his shield he'll take the Oath;
Therefore this eve is great festivity . . .
I would not miss it, Donal . . . Come on, man! ''
Those that were talking held on by their way;
When they were gone we heard the sentry say
As to himself, " Cernunnos boil their souls!
That leave me here to freeze while they drink wine!
I'll take mine ease awhile in yonder nook
That I wot of . . . All's safe here sure enough '' . . .
Growling he went some distance, so I thought;
At least we heard his heavy footsteps' tramp
Die quite away. Somewhat the wind had lulled;
Herenius rose and cautiously crept on;
All those who crouched upon the ledge prepared
To follow him . . . Towards the wall we came,
With inward groans and grumbles, by that deep
And narrow fissure cloven in the cliff;
And naught but grievous pains and perils now
Had we. Thenceforward it was harder far
To climb that beetling crag than lower down;

For there, at least, some notches we had found;
Here, there were none. We gripped the bending twigs
Of the dwarf juniper, or tufts of whin
Which pricked us sore, yet we must firmly grasp
The unfriendly shrub or lose our hold on life . . .
Now must we creep round a great bulging rock
On a steep slanting ledge that smaller grew
And narrowed by degrees till scarcely we
Might keep our knee-hold so confined the space . . .
A gust of wind came roaring up the glen
And swept athwart the bare face of the Rock,
Catching us as exposed to its full blast
Cowering we lay and clung to the rough stone,
Helpless to stir until the squall should pass . . .
Our Prefect at that moment stood erect,
Speaking unto our Guide in undertones,
He had no time to stoop ere the fierce gale
Smote him and whirled him back . . . His right foot slipped . . .
He staggered forward falling well-nigh prone,
Then rolled down t'wards the edge . . . We thought him gone . . .
Herenius tried to catch his arm but failed . . .
Theodosius clutched his tunic . . . the cloth gave . . .
And Maximus slid on and on, then fell

Over the verge and vanished . . . So we thought . . .
I heard young Marius groan, Gerontius curse . . .
But Graeme, who crouched the nearest to the edge,
Snatched at and gripped his left hand as he passed
That was flung high in helpless fashion . . . Then,
Squatting upon his hams, he flung himself
Backwards and pulled . . . Theodosius' hands were prompt
To grasp Graeme's shoulders . . Thus the twain upheld
Our Leader's weight, the while our Guide contrived
To reach his right arm . . . With a mighty heave
They hauled him up and got him on the ledge
Unharmed, though shaken and his left arm strained . .
He gripped Graeme's hand in silence, naught was said,
For speech was dangerous . . The wind died down . .
We took advantage of the lull and crawled
Round the cliff's bulging face, not unafraid,
For truth to tell none of us liked this job . . .
But whatsoe'er our trouble we pressed on,
Hanging by teeth and finger-nails; our toes
Stuck in the cracks and little crevices . . .
Our hobnailed boots were o'er our shoulders slung . . .
So without stopping came we 'neath the wall,
Which was a bare twelve feet, not more . . . What need,
When down below for nigh six hundred feet

The crag dropped sheer? Herenius now stood where
There was just space upon a narrow ledge
For a man's feet to rest . . . 'Twas but a niche
With room for one alone . . . With steady hand
He cast the ladder up against the wall.
For all his care it made a little clap
As the clutch caught the crenelle and held fast,
Herenius then sprung up at lightning speed
To be the first to mount the battlement;
Maximus pressed behind him, and the next
Was Theodosius, Graeme close on his heels,
Marius fifth and I myself the sixth,
Who had my lituus slung about my neck
Ready for use . . . Now by some cursèd spite
Young Marius bruised the green wound on his thigh
And felt it gaping; staggering he leant
Hard on my shoulder, just as my right foot
Pressed the first rung . . . "Hold me, or help me down,
Quintus, good lad," he muttered, turning faint.
"Nay, let me fall . . . I hinder" . . . In a swoon
He fell back in mine arms: Nigh was I down,
But clutched the rope with right hand for dear life
And held him 'gainst my breast. The Prefect turned
And swore in a hoarse whisper, "Dis take ye!
What is the matter there? Tribune, canst see

What those young fools are at? What! Marius
Fainted? Just lash him tight beneath the rungs . . .
So . . . Lift the ladder o'er him . . . Thanks, good
Graeme!
Quintus, stay thou to guard him at the foot . . .
Smartly, my men! Let all the rest in turn
Climb up and over his unconscious breast . . .
Hurry! For there is need . . . Now, Liticen!
Hand up thy bugle . . . And obey me, boy!
Stir not from here till either I send word,
Or Marius revived can climb the wall " . . .
Nigh jostling me in passing off the ledge,
They pushed on hurriedly and left me there,
Cursing my lot, to guard the ailing man,
Whose most unlucky ill-timed swooning-fit
Had now in deadly peril set our lives . . .
What passed above in part I saw, part guessed . . .
Gerontius later told me the whole tale . . .

For several moments had Herenius crouched
Below the ramparts, watching stealthily . . .
He thought he heard a movement on his right;
The ladder's clap had roused the sentinel
Who lurked within the angle of the wall,
Beyond the nearest bastion . . . He strode

Without delay towards the sound and heard
Our murmuring below . . . The moon shone out . . .
He saw Herenius, whose knee now was set
Upon the parapet . . . The sentry ran,
Meeting him right at the upcoming, but
Made neither noise, nor cry, nor any sound,
Because he thought to ding the intruder down—
He shot deliverly,[5] his bow to ear,
Without a moment lost . . . The arrow whizzed
Past the Proreta's cheek, but he, in jeopardy
To die, made a swift leap as agile as a cat,
And on the instant gat him by the neck,
So struck him upwards with his long sharp knife,
Holding his throat tight gripped beneath his hands
Until he left his life. When he saw well
The man was dead he flung him o'er the wall,
Whose body headfirst fell and bounding crashed
From rock to rock till in the flood below
It found swift burial . . . Herenius called
In guarded voice, " Prefect, why tarry ye?
All goes now as we will . . . Speed up your men
Lest the Watch come " . . . In full great haste they went . . .
I saw them one by one mount up the rungs;

[5] instantly.

But ere they might win up sped thither one
Who spied Herenius standing all alone
And knew he was not of his company.
In haste he rushed on him and sturdily
He would assail him, but Herenius smiled,
For he was a strong man and armed, his foe
In gala dress, with naught to ward a blow . . .
He brained him quickly with the heavy hilt
Of his short sword and flung him o'er the wall . . .
The body passed me close, I marked it go
Hurtling from crag to crag and heard the splash,
Though very far below . . . I saw my Lord
Was second man to mount upon the wall . . .
Theodosius third, and close behind the twain
Was Graeme the Cumbrian, who still shadowed them . .
Next came Count Maurice, Eochaidh sixth, I think . . .
While I stood chafing . . . Then the rest of them,
Seeing their Lord stand on the battlements,
Rushed up as they were mad, but ere they all
Had got astride the parapet there came
Some of the Watch in force, who sure had heard
Stirring and speaking or some clash and sound
Of rattling armour, or perchance the splash
Of bodies falling in the sea beneath . . .
Swiftly they came, and by their lanterns' gleam

They shot full sturdily, but our men rushed
To meet them hardily . . . Without ado
They struck them down, slew them despitefully . . .
Though some cried " Treason! Treason! " and fled
fast . . .
They fled not far, and that cry was their last!
The howling wind that beat in blustering gusts
About the Castle Rock drowned in its blast
Their warning shouts . . One warder who would blow
His bronze-tipped horn was felled by Maximus . . .
Pitching he fell, split to the shoulder, dead
Athwart the parapet and blocked the way;
Young Publius tossed him over as he passed . . .
Some of them, all aghast, leaped o'er the wall . . .
None of them gained the steps that led below
Unto the Castle Hall . . . They had no time . . .
Ta'en by surprize they fought or fled . . . All died . . .
There was no thought of quarter in the heart
Of Maximus or any of his men;
We dreamt of naught but victory that night,
And victory seemed very near us then!

ADVENTURE XXI.

Of the Fight in the Banquet-Hall of the Castle on the Rock—How Maximus made Terms with the Scots by the advice of Conan Meriadoc; and how Herenius won his Reward.

Now as the Prefect running led the way
Towards the archway of the Inner Wall,
I heard the unconscious man's quick jerky breath
Grow even, and he heaved a groaning sigh,
As coming to himself he feebly spake,
" What is it? Where am I? " . . . I told him all . . .
" Thou art safe here, Sir, for the time . . . But still
'Twere better far were we astride yon wall " . . .
Quoth he, " I think so too . . . Give me thy flask,
And I'll contrive to get there . . . Never fear! "
So with my help, when I his limbs untied,
We climbed upon the ramparts, and ran on
To overtake the others, and his arm
I took within mine own to give support;
But he, in his hot courage, sprang from me
As though unhurt. Thus, leaping o'er the dead,
We sped in haste . . . Now, as I ran, a man
Heaved himself on his elbow and struck up
To stab me as I passed . . . In sudden rage
I thrust at him with my long horseman's sword,

So ran him through, and laughed, well satisfied . . .
For I was filled with fierce hot battle-rage,
Though I'd ne'er killed a man until that day . . .
Quoth Marius, " Well done, young Liticen! "

So came we on our comrades' heels pell-mell
Down the vice[1] winding in the massive wall
That led towards the Keep. An iron door
Guarded the entrance to the Banquet-Hall.
Four sentries sat there dicing, their bent backs
Turned t'wards the stairway. They heard naught of us,
So great the din of that gay festival . . .
Maybe they were half drunk, for many flasks
Lay empty by them . . . Though the night grew late,
The Castle folk made merry in the Hall,
Dancing and singing and in other ways
Taking their pastime, as the custom is
When mirthful Lords carouse in joy and bliss,
Deeming themselves in full security . . .
We seized the sentries, slaying them forthwith
As they deserved who kept such careless watch . . .
Then, ere the folk within knew what had chanced,
We flung the doors wide open, so straightway

[1] Winding stairway.

Right in the Hall with all his armèd men
Strode Maximus, and cried on high, " Ho there!
Rome! Rome! All Hail! Hail! Valentinian, Hail!
Surrender all unto the might of Rome! . . .
Dowse thou the torches, Quintus, half of them!
Ye are surrounded! . . . Yield ye, Eugen's men! "

Now those there gathered, many as they were
And some well-armed, hearing the Roman call
Cried out right hideously, scared by that shout,
Nor knew they truly how to make defence,
Else great had been our peril; for far more
Were they than we and easily had they,
If any of them had retained their wits,
O'ercome us then; but they had lost their heads
And fought at random, wildly, without skill.
Then without pity our men slew them there,
Forcing them into corners, smiting them,
Till without doubt we gat the upper hand.
Many were slain, and others fled to find
Some place of shelter, but each door they tried
Was guarded . . . Half the torches on the wall
I had extinguished by my Lord's command;
Thus men fought in the shadows, seeing not
The scanty number of their daring foes . . .

Not long that fight . . . But few of us were hurt,
For we were armed, but most of them went bare
Of body-armour, clad in festal garb,
Though nearly all were girded with their swords . . .
Full many feasters lay low on the floor,
Their merry-making done, their warfare o'er . . .
The young King and his brother, with a few
Of their chief guests, maintained the Daïs still,
But were hard-pressed, their backs against the wall . . .
And at their feet, impeding them, there crouched
The women of the Court, fair maids and dames
In their gay robes; some of whom wept aloud,
But others clutched sharp daggers and prepared
To sell their lives as dearly as the men . . .
Cried Maximus again, " Surrender, King!
Yield to my mercy! . . . By the Emperor's Hand!
I will give quarter unto those who yield . . .
Else all your males shall die . . . Your women-folk
Be sold as slaves divided 'mongst my men . . .
Choose, King! And quickly . . . Once more, wilt thou
yield? "
Said Eugen sullenly, " I yield me, Sir,
Upon those terms . . . I have no other choice
If I would save my Queen . . . I know it well . . .
For her sake and my people's, lest they fall

Into thy ruffians' hands, I will submit . . .
Though for myself far rather had I died " . . .
He flung his blood-stained sword down at the feet
Of Maximus and cried despairingly,
" Niall! Put up thy blade, thou hothead! Stay!
We'll yield to fight them on another day . . .
Be guided, Prince, by me . . . Ethodius, thou
Shalt fight no more . . . Stand back, Sirs! " Vain his
words . . .
Young Niall from the Daïs leapt and ran
Fighting his way right up to Maximus,
Who met the boy's wild and impetuous charge
With a slight smile, coolly and unperturbed,
His short sword wielding with such practised skill
That Niall's mighty weapon useless proved
To break his guard . . . Meanwhile Ethodius ran
To meet his death at the stern Romans' hands
Rather than yield inglorious; but full soon
Theodosius and some others ringed him round . . .
Gerontius dashed his sword from out his hand,
Breaking his arm . . Soon then they had him bound . .
Yet now his captors guarded him from death,
For Maximus called loudly, " Spare the Prince
For old times' sake; Gerontius, slay him not,
But keep him safe " . . . Niall so fiercely fought

That now the Prefect had no time for aught
But to fight for his life with all his skill . . .
Eugen, who saw his brother hurt and ta'en,
While he stood by ashamed, his head bowed down,
Snatched up a spear that lay upon the ground
And madly rushed once more into the fray.
In the wild mellay that ensued it chanced
That Niall then was forced from Maximus
Apart; but 'gainst him in hot wrath like flame
Came Eochaidh, Prince of Leinster. Nothing loath,
Niall struck at him a hard swinging blow
Which Eochaidh warded, then returned as good,
With both hands wielding his great two-edged sword
In all the vigour of his desperate hate . . .

Think not that I watched idly the sword-play;
I did my part, and many blows I gave,
Many avoided; wounds as yet I'd none;
For I was light and nimble, and would run
Dodging my foeman's blows were he too strong,
Or rushing, prick him as a wasp doth sting,
Then leap away, so that I gat no hurt
Save some slight gash upon my left fore-arm,
A scratch upon my brow, and a bruised cheek,
Which I felt not, nor knew of at the time . . .

So sped I here and there in that affray . . .
The issue seemed in doubt . . . So many they
And we but few and weary . . . And our men
Were bleeding now from many heavy wounds . . .
Their harness soaked in blood, their faces stained
And grimed with gore and sweat, their limbs sore
strained . . .
But they fought hardily and staunchly on,
For well they knew their fate if Eugen won.

Then of a sudden from the Daïs came
A shout of " Hold ! . . . A truce ! O Romans, stay
Your hands ! Ye children of the Gael, sheathe swords !
Here is no cause for quarrel . . Hold ! . . Hear me ! "
'Twas Conan Meriadoc's cool high voice . . .
Men turned and gaped in blank astonishment
At his strange saying . . . Cried he lustily,
" Peace ! Take ye counsel, Sirs ! . . . To what avail
Do ye thus slay each other ? . . . I have here
News of the Picts . . . King Heirgust hath intent
To make his peace with Rome ; why should the Gael
Be less inclined to parley ? Eugen, stay
Thy hasty hand ; thy fiery temper curb !
Remember that thou gavest thy pledged word
But now to Maximus . . . What doest thou ?

Here is no chance, no hope of victory . . .
Yield thee to reason, King, if not to Rome! " . . .
There was a lull . . . The foemen on both sides
Stood panting, glad of respite every one
Within their secret hearts, yet fierce of mien
And glaring on each other grimly stared . . .
Cried Maximus, " Sirs! If ye yet will yield,
Mine offer holds " . . . Quoth Conan, " We accept . . .
King Eugen, lay thine arms down without shame . . .
Thou hast proved worthy of thy Grandsire's fame . . .
Fear not to play the wiser part and yield."
The young King sulkily gave up his spear
Unto Theodosius, then in angry gloom
Turned towards Conan, " When didst thou get word
Of Heirgust's actions? How long hast thou known? "
Said Conan, " Sire, I knew since early morn,
But an I'd told thee this thou hadst but said
I was deceived . . . I would not mar thy Feast . . .
I meant to keep it private till we met
In Council on the morrow " . . . As they spake
Stepped Maximus between the fiery youths
Eochaidh and Niall, who still stoutly fought . . .
He knocked their blades up, though at parlous risk,
For they were mad with passion; so at last,
Against their wills, these fighters stayed their hands.

Said Maximus, " Right bravely hast thou fought,
O Niall, King of Munster! Keep thy sword . . .
I have no quarrel with the Irish Septs . . .
Prince Eochaidh, thou shalt settle this dispute
At a more fitting season . . . Sheathe thy blade! . . .
Sheathe it and hold thy peace, Sir! . . . I am pledged
To give those quarter who consent to yield;
Yet I forget not thy wrongs need redress,
And thou shalt plead thy cause in York . . . or Rome . . .
Before a just Tribunal . . . Peace! Have done! "
With furious frown and a fierce oath the Prince,
Sheathing his sword, swung on his heel and strode
Apart in dudgeon . . . Niall loudly laughed,
" Here have I foe who knows not that word ' Peace,'
Nor will he e'er forget what I've not done . . .
I have no grudge against the fool, nor he
In truth 'gainst me, yet he thinks all I do
Is done in spite against him, General!
As for ye Romans, why have ye ne'er come
To test our Irish hospitality?
I know not why ye visit not our land,
I am prepared to make good terms with ye . . .
Conan hath shewn me wisdom, Maximus."
The Prefect smiled at his audacity,
Then gravely spake, " Thou art right well advised,

King Niall . . . We will speak of this anon . . .
Count Conan, I would ask thee of thy grace
Wilt thou explain why thou, so long our foe,
Doth now act as our friend? Wouldst thou to Rome
Be reconciled? In Rome's name I thank thee,
Firstly for setting free mine officer,
Caecilius Marius, then for this thine act
In calling truce . . . It was good policy . . .
I love not bloodshed without cause " . . . Said then
The crafty Count, and in his eye there gleamed
Something of subtlety, or so I thought,
Though his voice was full soft and his words smooth,
" Regent of Cornwall, thou who for our Queen
Dost govern by consent of Brython men,
I have repented me that I have been
A rebel . . . I desire Queen Helen's grace . . .
My cousin will forgive me if thou ask . . .
Who art her dear-loved husband, Maximus . . .
Often have I resolved to seek her face
But pride of rank and doubt of thee deterred . . .
Now I see well thou art a fitting mate
For Cornwall's Queen . . . If aught that I have done
In helping thee to-day to a firm peace
May counterbalance my rash jealousy,
Mine acts of war against the Cornish Realm . . .

Which, howe'er ill-advised, were done for love
Of what I then thought was my country's cause . . .
I pray thee, General, set my mind at ease,
And tell me that thou wilt accept my plea
For friendship and renewal of mine oath
Of fealty to Queen Helen . . . I have done . . .
Thou hast won all . . . I am a broken man . . .
My fate is in thy hands and that of Rome."
Said Maximus, " I will accept thy word,
And thy submission find most timely, Sir . . .
I pray thee let no further jealousy
Disturb our future dealings . . . I will see
That thou art recompensed for thy great loss . . .
So far as in me lies 'twill be my task
To aid thy fortunes, noble Conan . . . Soon
Thou shalt tell me of Heirgust and the Picts . . .
Thy knowledge of them shall prove help in need . . .
King Eugen, first must thou hear Rome's Decree,
That I am authorized now to pronounce . . .
Thou hast conspired against her privily,
Thou hast rebelled against her friendly rule,
Therefore must thou learn due obedience
By suffering deservèd punishment;
Thou shalt give up Alclwyd and all lands south
Of the Wall Antonine, and shalt retire

Unto thy Kingdom of the Dalriad.
Nor shalt thou let thy clansmen with the Picts
War as in bygone years; nor shall they raid
The southern borders, lest on thee should fall
Far heavier penalties . . . And thou shalt send
An annual tribute of which the full sum
Shall be awarded later when I hear
From Theodosius, Count of Britain, who
Hath given me instructions, and for whom
I act as Deputy north of the Walls.
Now hast thou heard the Imperial Decree!
King Eugen, swear upon thy bended knee,
Bareheaded, and bare-foot, in humble wise,
To keep these terms and that most faithfully,
Or thou shalt feel the heavy hand of Rome."

The young King reddened, then with scowling brow,
Fierce anger in his breast, knelt sullenly
Before the Prefect. Casting off his shoes,
His Royal Circlet tossing from his head,
Ungirded, and in bitter grief and shame,
He took the oath as likewise did his men.
Ethodius knelt beside his brother there . . .
Geraint had loosed his bonds . . . He groaned aloud,
Weeping hot tears, for he was weak with wounds;

Which, when the Prefect saw, he, bending down,
Took the young man's reluctant drawn-back hand,
And raised him, saying, " Not to thee the blame,
Ethodius, old friend. My heart is sore
To see thee grieve thus . . . Surely thou shalt come
With me to York when I make my report;
And I will ask the Count of Britain's grace
To find thee some right honourable post . . .
In Dacia or in Africa shalt thou
Command an Ala of the Gaelic Horse,
Or Cohort of th' Ebudean Islanders,
Raised by thyself amongst thy Clansmen, Sir " . . .
But said Ethodius angrily, " Forbear!
Nor mock me further . . . Rome hath won to-night
Our bodies, not our souls . . . Let Spanish knaves
And lap-dog Brythons lick thine Emperor's feet,
Not so the free-born Gael! . . . O Maximus,
Thou wert my comrade once, when to thy Rome,
That evil City, in ill hour I came,
Boy-hostage for my Father . . . Thou wert kind . . .
I thought thee then a true and faithful friend . . .
We talked of liberty for my dear Land,
Thou promisedst help and influence . . . Lies . . . All
lies!
Thou hast betrayed us and thy friendship shews

Hollow and false . . . My curse be on thy name! . . .
No! I want not thy proffered aid . . . Let go
Mine arm " . . . He fell in a deep swoon
And was borne thence and tended carefully
By our Aquilifer, who had some skill
In dressing wounds.
As Maximus stood there
Speaking with Conan, who drew him aside,
I saw amongst the dead men on the floor
A ghastly figure struggling hard to rise
From out the slippery pools of blood . . . He seemed
One of the Body-Guard, bare-headed, torn
With many a dreadful gash . . . Crawling he came
To where the Tribune Theodosius stood,
So swiftly, spite his wounds, I had no time
To do aught else but shout . . . He flung his arms
About the Tribune's knees to pull him down . . .
His right arm raised to stab him in the back . . .
Herenius, standing near, was just in time
To drag him off. He held him firmly gripped,
Drew back his throat to strike . . . Then stayed his
hand,
And stared down at the man . . . Cried Maximus,
" How now, Herenius, what doth ail thee, Sir?
Cut the dog's throat, or have him quickly hung

Over the ramparts dangling by his heels!
Here is no room for mercy . . . He had nigh
Killed my best friend by vilest treachery . . .
Why standest thou as though demented? . . . Strike!"
Herenius said, "I cannot!" In quick rage
The Prefect swore, "O Pluto take all Picts!
Uncertain and unstable are they all!" . . .
Then, without more ado, thrust his short sword
Through the man's side, whom the Proreta held
Struggling and swaying helpless in his grasp . . .
I heard a woman shriek as with a groan
The Pict fell writhing back and soon lay dead . . .
But still Herenius held him in his arms . . .
Quoth Maximus, "I owe thee far too much
To take due notice of thy most strange lapse . . .
Dismiss, Proreta! Thou art overstrained . . .
Why dost thou hold that carrion in thine arms?
Art crazy, man, that thou dost thus defy
Mine orders openly?" With gloomy look
And staring eye Herenius slowly said,
"He was my brother, Sir . . . My mother stands
There and has seen me help to kill her son" . . .
From 'mongst the cowering women then came one,
An old and withered crone, who yet meseemed
Once had been beautiful . . . With outstretched arm

She cursed our Prefect . . . " Thou hast killed my son,
My Tarla, my fair youngest born . . . O woe!
Why did I reckless school mine eldest son
To hate his countrymen? . . . I am undone!
I loved the Roman better than my kin,
Now am I childless for my punishment . . .
Curse thee, thou cruel heartless Maximus!
Mayst thou taste death and ruin! . . . Die in sin! "
Said then the Prefect soothingly, " Good dame,
I slew a traitor . . . Not thine only son . . .
For see thine eldest standeth by thy side,
His father's fame he hath right well maintained,
In him shalt thou thy consolation find " . . .
But she cried, " Out on him! His hand is dyed
In his own brother's blood . . . My curse on ye!
The pair of ye may Belen's Arrows blast![2]
Give me my Tarla! Ye vile murderers!
Henceforth I have no son " . . . Herenius stood
Pale to the lips; but to his side there came
A woman swiftly, and in silence took
His hand and stroked it gently with her own . . .
He laid his brother's body softly down,
Then turned to face the Prefect, and his sword
Hilt first he held towards him . . . His left hand

[2] The lightning.

The woman clinging to him still held fast . . .
Said then the Prefect, " Go, Herenius!
Thou shalt receive thy pension . . Keep thy sword . .
Yet for thy disobedience never more
Mayst sail aboard the quinqueremes of Rome.
Thou hast served faithfully until this hour,
Thou'rt pardoned for thy lapse of discipline,
Nor shalt thou miss thy promised great reward . . .
Bestow thy brother's body as thou wilt . . .
He was misguided . . . He hath paid his debt " . . .
Said then Herenius, " Prefect, thou art kind,
But I have doubly erred . . . I disobeyed,
Also unwittingly I helped to slay
My mother's son . . . I will take no reward . . .
I will make recompense " . . . He hurried thence . . .
We heard his footsteps echo as he ran
Up the stone steps that led towards the wall.
Cried Maximus, " Ho! Stop him! . . Where goes he?
He is distraught . . . O'ertake him, some of ye! "
We hurried after to behold the man
Standing upon the parapet; his arms
E'en as a diver's, poised high o'er his head
In act to leap down to his certain death . . .
We rushed to stay him . . . With loud warning call,
" Halt there, Proreta! Stay, Herenius, stay! "

Maximus ran, and Ethne by his side,
To hold him back . . . But quicker than us all
His mother had forestalled us . . . Her swift feet,
Old as she was, had won the race 'gainst Death . . .
She caught his girdle and her loving arms
Embraced and held him fast . . . " Woe's me, my son!
My son! Wouldst thou leave thus thy new-won bride?
Thy mother finds that thou hast all her heart . . .
Of Tarla's blood she holds thee guiltless . . . So
Leave me not childless, my Herenius, stay! "
Herenius turned and knelt low at her feet,
Hiding his face from all, and Ethne ran
To kneel with him . . . Said Maximus, " Enough!
Leave them in peace, friends! Here have we no
place " . . .

He strode back to the Hall, where now the dawn
Came creeping in at windows, and the flames
Of the fast-smouldering torches sank and died.
Upon the Daïs crouched the frightened maids
And women of the Court . . . Our soldiers grinned
And eyed them daringly . . . Said Maximus,
" Summon the slaves and menials of the place,
And see the Hall cleansed, Terence." Then he turned
To where King Eugen stood in sullen mood,

Head sunk, his arms loose hanging at his sides,
His eyes full of the scalding bitter tears
That pride forbade him shed . . . His woe appealed
Unto the Prefect, who full kindly spake,
" King of the Dalriad, lead me to thy Queen . . .
I would not have her share thy misery
Who is an high-born dame, and innocent
Of all offence " . . . Then Eugen, without speech,
Brought him to where Cartandès stood, and she
Wept not, nor wailed, but waited proudly there . . .
High-held her head, queenly her noble air . . .
She was the daughter of a Cambrian Prince
Whose name escapes me, though I think 'twas he
Who ruled o'er Dyved in those by-gone years . . .
She took her husband's hand and smiled on him,
He looked not on her but upon the ground.
Her fearless eyes she turned on Maximus,
" Thou hast done nobly, Roman! Great indeed
Thy triumph over unarmed men who kept
Their festival in peace, nor thought on war!
My husband thou hast shamed and slain his men
Like dogs . . . For what? To gratify a whim . . .
To win a wager I am told . . . To ease
That itching love of fame that pesters thee . . .
Oh, truly thou hast won much honour, Sir! "

" Lady," said Maximus, " I will not dare
Dispute with thee . . . Methinks my clumsy speech
Were no match for thy tongue . . Thy husband knows
Who is to blame for this great misery
That now befalls the people of the Gael . . .
I much regret that thou must in this woe
Dwell for a season . . . Know! Thou and thy maids
Shall have due honour and all courtesy " . . .
She turned her back on him with haughty smile . . .

Said Marius, speaking humbly in low voice,
" Prefect, have I thy leave to say a word?
Some of these maidens here were captive ta'en
By Niall's men, who sold them then for slaves . . .
Wilt thou not free them? " To his side there ran
One maid of whom he spake, Darerca called,
Richilla's sister . . . Maximus looked round,
" So thou art here? Not dead? And dost thou dare
To ask a favour, Marius? I thought thee
Strapped safely to thy ladder . . . Where in truth
Thou ought to be kept fast until next morn,
Thou heedless rascal! Get thee hence and take
Sick leave until I bid thee make report . . .
Is this thy Breton maiden? She shall stay
In honour with King Eugen's noble Queen

Until I can bestow her otherwise . . .
Her sister too, and those young maids below . . .
We have no niche on board a Quinquereme
Or in our Camps for such fair fragile ware . . .
Marius! Ere thou tak'st leave first shalt thou, Sir,
Escort the Queen and all her women-folk
Unto the Border, where King Eugen goes
Under the guard of Theodosius . . .
The Tribune needs a trusty Officer,
Be thou beneath his orders . . . Let with thee
Fifty Asturians of thy Turma ride
And Quintus as thy Liticen . . . See thou
Keep a strict eye upon thy charges, Sir! . . .
Has Andragathius yet returned, Geraint?
I sent him to make sure that those below
Who hold the Barbican should be entrapped " . . .
Said Geraint, " Sir, the Count bade me report
That he has captured by a stratagem
The warders of the Barbican . . . He stays
As yet to hold the Castle-Gate, my Lord . . .
The Town is roused, and folk run up and down . . .
There are lights flashing up the river, Sir."
Said Maximus, " 'Tis well! . . . Send word to him
To keep me warned . . . Quintus, sound the Dismiss!
Do thou, good Graeme, post twelve fit men as guards!

See them relieved in two hours' time . . And, Graeme,
A word with thee . . . I'll bear in mind this night
And how thou kept so staunchly at my back . . .
Aye, friend, I owe thee that I'll ne'er forget . . .
As I will shew thee later . . . Now I go
To speak with Conan Meriadoc, who
Has much to tell me that I ought to know
Concerning Heirgust and the cunning Picts . . .
See that the men are fed well . . Broach them wine . .
And ye, my trusty friends, sit down and dine . . .
Theodosius, own that I have fairly won
That wager that thou wottest of " . . . He smiled,
And gripped the Tribune's ready outstretched hand,
Who laughing said, " I own it, Maximus."

Next morn we left the Burgh in the safe hands
Of the young Brython Chief Cunetha, who
Ruled in his Father's name Alclwyd's strong Rock
As Deputy for their Lord Maximus.
This Burgh was called Dun Brython from their rule,
Which now, in error, some Dumbarton name . . .
And later Maxen's Line held firm the Rock;
Nor hath the Gael henceforth had power to claim
This noble fortress, pride of all Strathclyde.[3]

[3] Cf. Skene *Celtic Scotland*, Vol. I., pp. 235, 365 (Kingdom of Alclyde).

Soon after, we marched south to Hadrian's Wall;
From thence the Prefect Maximus was called
To York to make report unto his Chief . . .
He won much credit, and a Triumph held
In York's great City that enhanced his fame,
In which young Marius and some others shared;
Then were there merry-makings, sports and games,
Wherein trained gladiators shewed their skill,
Of whom some died, some earned their due release . . .
But Maximus gained money and renown . . .
The troops applauded one who ever seemed
Free-handed and ungrudging . . . He kept too
His General's favour and indeed his love . . .
Though some have late denied this . . . Ah, they lie!
Count Theodosius liked our Prefect well,
For he was prompt and never shirked hard work . . .
In those days Fate was kind to Maximus,
Nor did forebodings haunt his hours of ease.

ADVENTURE XXII.

The Farewell of Maximus and Theodosius—How Maximus remembered Spain, his native Land, and sighed for the Joys of Rome, but Theodosius praised a Country Life—How Theodosius and his Father departed, and Maximus was made Duke of Britain, yet was ill-content.

The old Centurion thus beguiled our ears
With tales of men long dead and by-gone wars,
While we delayed, entrenched on Hartlip's Hill . . .
Mons Cervi Labrum keeps its old name still . . .
Nor came there news of any fresh assault
Or movement of the foe . . . The Saxons stayed
Inactive, and 'twas said that Hengest sought
To make fresh pact. He sent a flag of truce,
Asking for armistice for fourteen days,
Proposing that the Chieftains on both sides
Should meet in open council . . . Wroth were then
Cunetha and his sons, and thought it ill . . .
The other Leaders had divided minds;
So was there wrangling and much heady talk,
But in the end naught came of it . . . We stayed
Within our borders and kept cautious watch,
Though of a truth a bold dash had proved best
And truest wisdom . . . Fate ruled otherwise . . .

Then once again within the portico,

The cool delightful covered colonnade,
Of Attius' country-house we lay at ease . . .
Some talked, some drank, a few made merry sport . . .
The elders sat there gloomy and depressed;
Though the young men, unheeding, slightly bored
By the long respite from the game of war,
Saw naught, they swore, to give cause for alarm . . .
Donatus spake: " Mine Uncle, tell us more
Of thy strange story . . . If the Princes choose
To keep us idly kicking up our heels,
'Twere surely a wise policy for thee
To entertain us with thy lively tales,
Lest we die here of sheer monotony
And leave these doughty Saxons naught to do! "
Quintus looked at his nephew's laughing face
Half angrily . . . Said he, " I will tell more
That thou mayst learn it is unwise to mock . . .
We loiter here too long I greatly fear . . .
Then listen, ye who will . . . Alas! That now
Men speak much and do little . . . Would that ye
Might take ensample from the valiant deeds
I shall relate to idlers who know naught
Of strenuous warfare as it should be waged " . . .
He paused a moment, thinking of the past,
Its joys and terrors . . . " Well . . . Where was I,
friends?

Ah, I remember . . . How the years fly by!

The elder Theodosius . . . hard his fate[1]
Who served his country and his Emperor well . . .
Died for no fault, called traitor to the State;
In Africa his blood the scaffold stained;
Such his reward . . . 'Twas said his ruin caused
By jealousy of secret foes at Court . . .
His son retired to Spain to his estates . . .
I stayed in Britain, serving Maximus . . .

When Theodosius unto Rome returned
From his campaign and left this realm in peace,
To Maximus was given a great charge . . .
To hold the Frontiers 'gainst the heathen Picts,
The Northmen and the Scots . . . And this did he . . .
With heartfelt grief he parted from his friend,
Young Theodosius. Gripping fast his hand
He led him to the window-seat within
The Castle Hall of York's great Citadel . . .
Near to that alcove, as it chanced, that day
I was on guard within the Corridor . . .
By some neglect the door was left ajar . . .
I think the two saw not that I stood there.

[1] Cf. Richter, *Das Weströmische Reich* . . . pp. 401-2.

I dare not leave my post, so heard perforce
What passed between them in that parting hour.
I mind me well how that long time they sat . . .
At first not speaking much . . . but afterward
They talked of many things . . . Of boyhood's days
And of their native Land they spake awhile,
Then of Imperial Rome . . . My Master's eyes
Were blazing then . . . Sometimes he rose and paced
The Hall with hasty steps; then sat again,
Leant forward laughing, touching his friend's arm . . .
Now with a frown he spake in wrathful wise,
Then smiled once more as they lived o'er old days . . .
They spake together in such earnest tones
I could not choose but hear . . .
" Good Comrade mine " . . .
'Twas Maxen's voice that brake the silence first . . .
" Remember me in Rome . . . Would I went there!
I love not much this Northern land of bogs . . .
The moorland and the heath, the forest wild
Are my dominions now . . . I'd give them all
To any soldier of my company
To see once more the coast of Tarracon
Rise from the waves, and tread the shores of Spain,
And seek the little town where I was born . . .
Bilbilis, famed for armour and swift steeds[1A] . . .

[1A] Cf. Martial I. 49, X. 104.

Dear Mountain City sung by Martial's tongue . . .
Who was my countryman and thine, dear friend . . .
Oh! Thou wilt see our sun-loved Land of Spain . . .
With following winds and easy course thou'lt sail
To land 'neath Tarracon's high citadel.
Thence, rolling swiftly shall thy chariot-wheels
That lightly go, nor rumbling vex the ear,
Bring thee to Bilbilis and thy loved Salo ere
The short fifth stage is done . . . Greet then for me
My Mother . . . How I long to see her face . . .
To hear her gentle voice . . . It may not be . . .
My brother Marcellinus thou mayst find
On leave from Rome . . Embrace him, friend, for me . .
Thou dost not know him well, but thou shalt learn
In him to note a faithful honest soul,
Brave and enduring . . . Thou wilt love him more
Than his unworthy brother in the end . . .
He has none of my faults . . . Why dost thou smile?
I know I am a jealous sulky dog . . .
Over-ambitious, greedy to win fame,
Too eager to grow rich . . . Yet spite of all
I love my friends, and thou of them art first . . .
Ah! Why, my Theodosius, must thou go
And we be parted? Something warns my soul
That we shall never be the same again . . .

Some shadow creeps between us . . . Icy cold
Rolls up the darkness, desolate and chill . . .
O' nights I often lie as in a trance . . .
I grope and search, thou dost evade me still . . .
At last I see thee raised on high, remote,
Right grim and stern of aspect; and thine eyes
So fierce they dazzle me . . . I feel them pierce
Mine inmost soul . . . I seem to fall
Low crouching at thy feet . . . A foolish dream
From which I shudd'ring wake, then laugh to think
That I should be afraid, e'en in a dream,
Of thee or any man . . . Forget my words . . .
It is the dread of losing thee that brings
Such stupid visions . . . Wilt thou greet for me
The few friends, but right faithful, that still keep
Some memory of me in my boyhood's days . . .
Old Fabius, Lausus and young Urbicus;
Julia, sweet Celia and fair Canacè . . .
Married by now, I warrant, all the three . . .
'Tis ten long years, I swear, since I was home,
But still in fancy I see tower snow-clad
The heights of ancient Gaius and the clefts[2]
Of sacred Vadovero . . . Ah! Not I, but thou
Shalt see, with what delight, Boterdus' Grove,

[2] Martial, I. 49.

Laden with fond Pomona's dainty gifts . . .
'Tis thou, not I, shalt cleave the sluggish shoals
Of sun-warmed Còngedus; seek quiet pools
Nymph-haunted; then go plunge thine unstrung limbs,
To brace them, into Salo's sparkling rill
That would freeze steel . . . So shalt thou leaping run,
Thy strength restored, and every limb aglow . . .
Then at Voberca maybe thou wilt dine,
Where thou shalt find boars ready for thy spear . . .
Or from the o'erpowering heat 'neath shady trees
By golden Tagus shalt thou find relief . . .
There shalt thou lie and dream of victories
In days to come and hard-fought battles won . . .
Spare then, my friend, one little thought for me.

When thou dost tire of country life thou'lt go
To glorious Rome the ever wonderful . . .
The Emperor, loving thee for thy great worth,
Shall surely send thee forth to win renown . . .
Thou shalt gain honour in some Eastern War . . .
Riches shalt earn; then, laurel-decked thy head,
Thou shalt be hailed a mighty Conqueror!
High Persian Satraps shall thy Triumph grace . . .
Dragged at thy chariot-wheels shall Romans see
The Monarchs of the East . . . The mob's hoarse roar,

Its heartfelt cheers, shall shew its love for thee . . .
Thou shalt be raised unto the highest place,
Valens shall honour, Valentinian praise . . .
Thy fame secure, thy name on every tongue . . .
While I rot here forgotten . . . Oh, think not
That I have envy in my heart for thee . . .
It is not that . . . I swear it is not that . . .
But I would bear thee company, fair friend . . .
We two in very truth might win the World . . .
O hope forlorn! When shall I see thee, Rome?
Sometimes o' nights I dream of thee, dear Town . . .
The City of my choice . . . What though I am
A Spaniard born, a Briton by descent?
I am thy Citizen . . . My youth was spent
Amidst thy gardens and thy palaces,
And in thy roaring, noisy, well-loved haunts . . .
Oh, how I miss thee, City of my dreams!
He who has dwelt in Rome adores her stones,
Desires her more than wealth or women's love . . .
Exiled, he pines and dies for sake of Rome!
Ah! Dost thou not remember, friend o' mine,
Thy Father's villa on Janiculum?
Not near that cursèd haunted spot where once
Came wretched criminals to meet their fate . . .
A place of horror and of cruel death;

The feeding ground of vultures and wild dogs,
Where withered bodies on their crosses hung
To rot and dry 'neath blistering wind and sun;
Which still is haunted by their bitter pain,
Where executioners still burn or maim . . .
Why speak I of it? Why think of those scenes? . . .
I would see only the fair northern slopes,
Crowned by their lovely gardens, that look down
From the long crest of high Janiculum,[3]
Where hidden they perch above its wide-stretched vales . . .
There on its level, scarcely swelling, crown
We breathe pure air that straight from Heaven blows . . .
In the deep hollows of the vale beneath
Rememb'rest thou the creeping mists would lend
At dawn and sunset mystic colouring,
A radiant glow that nowhere else is found.
At night the clear stars seem to stoop and kiss
The carven roof of that fair house of thine . . .
And see! The Seven Lordly Hills of Rome
Rise up in majesty . . . Before our eyes
The whole vast teeming City dreaming lies,
Girt by her mighty Walls; while far beyond

[3] Martial, IV. 64.

The Tusculan and Alban Hills unfold . . .
Travellers below on the Flaminian Way
Ride in light chariots that we see, not hear . . .
No rumbling of their wheels disturbs our rest;
Nor on our slumbers shall the steersman's shout,
Nor boatmen's noisy song as they row by,
Break in to spoil our dreams . . . Though near at hand
Standeth the Mulvian Bridge, and many keels[4]
Slip with the tide on sacred Tiber's flood . . .

O Theodosius! Hearest thou not as I
The yellow Tiber 'neath his bridges roar?
See'st not the golden gleam as tawny mane
The flashing river tosses in the sun,
When past the Cattle-Market wild and free
He speeds through marshlands foaming to the sea?

Canst thou not see clear rising 'fore thine eyes
The picture that is graven on my heart?
The Forum from the East . . . Look! Where on high[5]
The Capitol blocks out the western sky!
O Place of Glory! Place of Death and Shame!
What story could thy stones tell of thy fame?

[4] Cf. Street (trans.) *Martial's Epigrams*, p. 57.

[5] Cf. Huelsen, *Roman Forum*, 2nd ed., and his other works on Rome.

Where conquerors have triumphed, where have died
The countless victims of their ruthless pride! . . .
Yet I love well Rome's stately Market-Place;
Despite the dreadful awe that ever clings
To each tall column, every haunted stone
Throughout the Town and Citadel of Rome.

See'st thou troop up the Sacred Way a throng
Of chattering citizens . . . Wool-clad, beak-nosed . . .
Some are clean-shorn, some have short, close-cropped
beards . . .
About the steps of Saturn's ancient Fane
Idly they lounge and pass the time of day.
There, on the left, the gloomy Carcer stands . . .
E'en now I see its doors flung open wide,
As from the awful Tullianum's depths[6]
Is brought up that I would not look upon . . .
See! On the Steps of Wailing[7] careless flung
A naked body that doth bleeding fall
And panting breathes its last . . . Now it lies still . . .
Nor doth the justly punished traitor hear
The hoots and yells of the fierce mocking crowd
That daily waits to jeer the foes of Rome:
Nor will he feel the sharp keen-piercing hooks

[6] The State Prison. [7] Gemonian Steps.

Wherewith they drag from the Gemonian Steps,
When three long days and nights have slowly passed,
His mangled corpse unto the Tiber's banks
And cast it in the muddy rushing stream.
Old Father Tiber takes his erring son
In kindly arms, and to oblivion bears,
Nor recks if justly or unjustly judged,
Hiding his failure from the sight of men . . .
Why harp I thus on shameful death and sin,
And horrid sights like these, when I would dream
Of the fair splendour and the joys of Rome?

I see the Consul Major as he goes
In state unto the Senate . . . No one less
Than Valentinian our proud Emperor . . .
Ah! What a splendid, noble-looking man![8]
The fresh high colour glowing in his cheeks,
The shining locks, the strong and stalwart limbs,
The keen blue eyes, though somewhat stern and cold,
Do well become his royal dignity,
Nor had disgraced a God of the old days . . .
Alas! That such a wondrous harmony
Of beauty in his person doth not shew

[8] Cf. Amm. Marcell. XXX. 9 (6). Consul A.D. 367 (Helvicus, *Chron. Hist.)*

United with more generosity
And kindliness of temper . . . He is harsh . . .
Nor can his best friend hope in him to find
Aught but a hasty and imperious mood . . .
Thy Father's a stern man but he is just . . .
If he condemn, as I have heard him do,[9]
Some wretched traitor to be burnt alive,
Or scourged to death, or lose his feet or hands,
He gloats not o'er the sufferer's sharp pangs,
But dooms him with reluctance . . . We all know
The Emperor with an unmoved heart doth send
Those who offend him to most cruel deaths . . .
He never pardons, knows not to shew grace,
Hears no excuses, but 'neath tortures dire
He loves to see his enemies expire . . .
I see him riding with sardonic smile
On his hard handsome features, and before
March his twelve Lictors: stern-faced, stalwart men,
Who with their axes carry rods fast bound . . .
Dread symbols of the Law that also serve
As implements its Justice to enforce . . .

How clearly I recall that varied scene . . .
I see the old dame sitting in the shade[10]

[9] Cf. Amm. Marcell. XXIX. 5 (22, 24, 49, 50, etc.).
[10] Cf. M. Crawford, *Ave Roma Immortalis* (*Region X.*).

Selling roast chestnuts, near the once-famed shrine
Of the Twin Brethren . . . There goes one who'll rue
That he e'er sucked the wine-bag . . . Tipsily
The drunken soldier to his quarters reels;
His helm, set wrong side foremost, dangling o'er
His blinking eyes . . . Here congregate the Jews:
The thick-curled, high-capped money-changers, who,
Clad in their long-sleeved yellow gaberdines,
Chatter and handle coins in greasy hands,
And clutch their precious bags beneath their gowns . .
I see the idlers sprawling on the tiles,
Sunning themselves; some scrawling diagrams
Upon the marble slabs where they play games
Of chance with pebbles or with lupin-seeds.
See! One knave shouts with glee and proudly shews
His pebbles clearly ranged three in a row . . .
He claims the game is his . . . With sourest grin
His fellow pays him . . . Dark his half-hid frown . . .
'Tis like he'll murder him ere sun goes down
To get his money back . . . There, from the schools,
Run home the merry chattering high-born boys,
Guarded by slaves, who bear their masters' rolls
And waxen tablets . . . 'Neath the portico,
In most delightful shade and cool, the folk
Stay gossiping who wait their coming turn

To have their cases tried before the Courts.

Here too I stand in fancy and watch long
The surging crowd around us . . . See, where play
Half-naked, graceful imps, who laughing run
About the marble columns in and out,
Teasing the sleeping dogs that languidly
Bask in the sun . . . Merchants, I mark, who come
From farthest borders of the earth to sell
Their motley wares . . Persians and Greeks and Jews,
Egyptians, Indians, and dark Syrians,
With tall fair Northern traders, congregate:
All, babbling noisily, gesticulate;
And all would fleece one to the very skin;
So greedy to gain money are these rogues.
I mark the frowzy wool-draped commoners,
The wealthy freedmen, hideous fat black slaves . . .
Slim handsome Greeks, great strong-limbed Saxons
who
Must like the negroes bear their servitude;
Reluctant or contented, all are thralls . . .

Soldiers from the four quarters of the Globe,
On duty or on leave, throng all the Town.
Look! Where bronzed Legionaries pass in shoals[11] . . .

[11] Cf. Plautus, *Epidicus* II. sc. 2.

'Tis the Fourth Scythicans from Eastern climes . . .
From Northern Syria's sandy deserts come,[11A]
After long years, rejoicing to their homes.
Their heavy harness doffed they march at ease,
Kits slung on baggage mules, but arms displayed
And standards proudly waving on the breeze . . .
Each man has prisoners, pretty boys and girls
Tied up by twos and threes; one man has five,
The lucky dog! And goodly spoil besides . . .
Watch how the people throng them . . . Mothers run
To pick out each her sunburnt sturdy son . . .
Their kinsmen greet them, hanging on their arms;
And there trip dancing-girls and courtesans,
Decked in their best, each fain to trap a man,
In wondrous garments, sparkling with rich gold,
Of all the latest fashions, newest dyes . . .
Vermilion, saffron, mallow,[12] marigold . . .
Such Syrens lack not fish to fill their nets:
Goths, Vandals, Germans, Brythons tall and strong . .
Their arms ring-decked, necks circled by gold torques,
Whose long mustachios and fair flowing locks
Do mark their Northern race . . . stride by and glance
With ignorant disdain at all they see;

[11A] *Quarta Scythica*, stationed in Syria (Dion. Cassius LV. 23).

[12] For mallow dye, cf. Plautus, *Aulularia*, III. sc. 10.

With them, linked arm in arm, there laughing go
Trim lithe-limbed Thracians, swarthy Parthians,
To-day their dearest friends . . . next morn, fierce foes!
Wild Suevians, barbarous Alans, proudly stalk,
Eyeing the Roman folk despitefully . . .
See, where with haughty smile a scornful Gaul
Or Southern Briton, in the Roman dress
Apes his Italian conquerors, and swears
He is as much a Citizen of Rome
As they . . . Glad of new blood, Rome welcomes all . . .
Iberians too have learnt to own her sway,
And she deals justice equally to those
Who have submitted and her Laws obey . . .
Though, I admit, at times great Rome doth sleep
And Justice nods . . . None know as well as I
Mistakes are made and men unfairly blamed,
Their whole lives ruined for some trifling fault.

Dost thou remember my last day in Rome,
Before I was arrested, tried, and sent
In deep disgrace to Africa's parched shores
To serve as Stator,[12A] higher post denied,

[12A] Orderly of Military Police: Maxen Guledic (Emperor) *Protec* (Protector=Legate) *Ebiud or Eliud* (Army-Leader, General, lit. *brave in battle*), *Stater or Stator* (Mil. Police-Orderly) son of the Pincr Misser (Pincerna=Cupbearer and Mixer) of Constans, son of Constantine the Great. Cf. Harl. MS. 3859, Ped. ii., (*Cymm.* ix.) and Nicholson, Dynasty of Cunedag (Cymm. xxi. pp. 78-82).

Stripped of all privilege and knightly rank?
Ah! I can see the Forum as though I
Were walking there with thee this very hour!
I mark the gladiators swinging by
On leave from their School-barracks . . . See how they
Elbow e'en Guardsmen from their chosen path,
Who, with a laugh, make way for the spoiled pets
Of Rome's vast jaded populace . . . Hark! How
With cheers the crowd its favourite fighter greets!
There go their rivals, two gay charioteers . . .
Slight agile fellows who about their waists
Have strapped their gilded reins and proudly strut . . .
Far wealthier they than we poor devils who
Risk our mean stipends on their daring skill . . .
I wonder if Hilarion's driving still?
I made a little backing his great race
When he fell twice, yet won in spite of that . . .
His steeds unlamed, his reins uncut, he sped,
And, midst the cheers of friends, the hoots of foes,
He made the seven circuits, so received
His well-earned wreath and *bravium* of weighed gold . .
All that I won I lost at dice ere morn,
Save what I'd flung away to please the whims
Of Lady Claudia . . . Dost remember her?
O Theodosius, spare that look of scorn!

I was a young fool then, but meant no harm . . .

Mark but yon swaying litter, shoulder-high
Borne by huge Nubian slaves, who roughly push
Through the great crush . . . Is not that Claudia,
The Admiral's sister? He who years ago
Met with that sore defeat and lost the lives
Of many Romans . . . Sure, thou'st not forgot
How once we saw her from her litter lean
And scold the mob, shrill urging on her slaves . . .
'Plague on this swarming rabble!' cried she, 'I
Would that my noble brother lived, and he
Were Admiral still . . . So would ye lose your lives,
Ye nasty, greasy, evil-smelling knaves!'
At which a mocking voice from out the crowd
Made answer, 'Aye! As on that fatal day
So many of us Romans bled and died
When your fond brother funked and sailed away! . . .
Out on thee, harlot! Painted witch! Go home
And let thy husband learn to keep thee close
Lest we claim vengeance for our kin betrayed!'
She fumes in vain . . . Oh! I can plainly see
Where rides Jovinian, Master of the Horse,
With him Valerian of the Imperial Guard . . .
Their glittering armour and their waving plumes

Please well my Lady Claudia's roving eye.
She smiles to see Valerian rein his horse
That caracoling, plunging, prances by,
And waves her hand, as he looks back and smiles . . .
I loved her not, though flattered by her wiles . . .
And thou . . . thou didst detest her, didst thou not?

Ah, Theodosius! Would that thou and I
Might meet as once of old at Trajan's Baths,
Or Diocletian's . . . In the summer heat
How pleasant their delights! Our ears and eyes
Enchanted by sweet music and rare sights!
Dost thou remember how we passed the hours?
The games we played to stimulate the skin,
The wrestling and the tennis; then within
The steaming vapour veiled our dripping limbs . . .
We sought the swimming pool . . . Delicious plunge
In the cool marble basin . . . When, rubbed down
We rested, wrapped in our light shaggy cloaks,
And gossiped at our ease, light-handed slaves
Anointed us with fragrant soothing oils . . .
How rough and rude the makeshifts in this Isle,
Compared with those luxurious Baths of Rome!

I miss in these waste dreary solitudes

The gay noise and the bustle of the Town . . .
How often we have stood to hear the voice,
Stentorian-lunged, of the newsmonger cry
From the high Rostra all the public news . . .
Now he proclaims some glorious victory
In Persian deserts . . . Caledonian wilds . . .
Some Triumph granted to the Conquerors . . .
A Gladiatorial Show announces now,
Held in the Forum, maybe the next day;
Or he retails a murder; broadly hints
At some fresh slander; notice gives of plays,
The latest epigram, the newest books . . .
Mark how the people listen, gaping-mouthed . . .

All sorts of folk of high and low degree
Mix in the Forum . . . Plainly I can see
The market-women sit to sell their wares . . .
Lynx-eyed Curators walk in solemn pomp,[13]
Inspecting scrupulously booths and stalls,
And sniffing daintily as with stern looks
They bid their officers at once remove
The rotten apples and the mouldy pears,
The smuggled silks, the may'be stolen goods,
Whose owners, crestfallen, with ready tears

[13] Plautus, *Rudens*, II. sc. 4.

Implore their mercy, shrinking from arrest . . .
Here honest buxom freedmen's wives have come
To do their shopping . . . Painted courtesans[14]
Throng the basilicas where false husbands sneak
To seek amusement that they lack at home . . .
Schoolboys and girls with tablets run along . . .
In the Fish-market touts for dinners try
To catch subscribers . . . An thou wouldest find
A perjurer the Law-Courts will supply
The finest samples . . . Liars here abound,
And cock-sure boasters everywhere are found . . .
But the rich citizens and well-to-do
Ye may see in the Lower Forum go,
Taking the evening air. Near the Canal
Are people who put on the vainest airs . . .
Beyond the Curtian Lake a cheeky set
Of evil-minded chatterers I've oft heard
Talk scandal of their neighbours . . . Friend, beware
When thou gett'st back to Rome of those who sit
Near the old shops . . . Those cursèd usurers
Who'll suck thee dry . . . Oh, I have often seen
Down in the Tuscan Street most wretched men
Ready to sell their very souls for gold!
Who, gambling, had lost all but their bare lives . . .

[14] Plautus, *Curculio*, IV. sc. 1.

Alas! I know their feelings but too well . . .
I have been trapped myself . . . Was tempted . . . fell.
Thou knowest, Theodosius, why I'm here . . .
Though I win fame, I shall be exile still . . .
Wilt say a word for me, old friend, when thou
Dost see the Emperor . . . But, mind thee, naught
To Gratian . . . No! . . . We once were right good
friends,
I loved the boy . . . Oh! I can see him now!
His brilliant eyes . . . His lovely graceful form[15] . . .
Bright gold his hair and on his cheeks soft down
That marked his budding manhood . . . Fair of face
And seemingly most sweet, most full of grace
Was young Prince Gratian, Valentinian's son.
Alas! I guessed not he would turn perverse,
Fickle and false unto his faithful friend,
Yet so he proved to me. My heart nigh brake
When I was told he mocked at my distress.
I heard from Andragathius that he laughed
To hear of my disgrace . . . I know not why . . .
It hurts me sore . . . I will not think on it.
He told his Father spiteful lies and I
Owe my hard punishment to him, I'm sure . . .
Damn the young brute! How dare he laugh at me,

[15] Cf. Amm. Marcell. XXVII. 6 (15).

And mock my grief and jeer at my great woe,
When I went banished from Imperial Rome,
With Valentinian's stern and harsh rebuke
Loud ringing in mine ears . . . I hear it yet
And blush to think of my mad foolishness . . .
It was no more . . . Nor had I greatly erred . . .
I was not drunk . . . That was a lie unproved . . .
Though, faith! I grant thee I should not have diced
When keeping guard outside the Emperor's door . . .
As for Valerius . . . whom I own I slew . . .
'Twas in fair fight and he deserved his fate
For slandering my mother's spotless name . . .
My conduct angered Valentinian
And brought on me his wrath . . That irks me not . .
I've ta'en my punishment . . . But when I muse
On Gratian's strange and cruel part therein
I writhe with rage . . . I hate the brutal boy
Who used me as his plaything . . . Brake me . . . then
Tossed me thus flippantly away . . . Curse him!
O Comrade! I must think thereon no more,
Lest brooding on it I forget mine oath,
My soldier's duty and my firm-kept faith,
So lose mine honour . . . I have naught else left " . . .
Maximus sank his head upon his breast,
His dark face flushed, hot tears suffused his eyes,

So deep and fierce the inward fire that raged
In his torn heart as he thought on lost Rome.
Then said he bitterly, " But as for thee
Thou wilt rule men and conquer half the World . . .
While I stagnate " . . . He turned in sullen mood
To hide from Theodosius his wrung face;
For he grew restless, having a wild soul
That loved adventure, and the busy whirl
Of men's conflicting minds. The cares of State
Came not amiss to him.

Then said his friend,
" Why, Magnus mine! Fain would I stay with thee . . .
Faith! I've no wish to live in noisy Rome . . .
Byzantium and her domes I would not see . . .
I love a country life . . . At times I vow
That I will change my sword for spade and hoe,
And lead a farmer's life amidst my crops.
Ah! But like thee I love our Spanish Land!
Aye, when the hoarse North Wind with icy breath[16]
Shall roaring bellow like some monstrous bull;
When chill December comes and Winter bursts
In all his furious wrath upon the North,
And riots in our Spanish Highlands too,
Till all our mountain peaks are white with snow . . .

[16] Cf. Martial, I. 49.

Why, then with joy I hope to tread the strand
Of Tarracon, and see the sun thereon
Gleam rosy-gold . . . Thy Mother I will greet
In thy dear Bilbilis . . . Thy brother's hand
Grasp in thy stead, and tell thy boyhood's friends
Of all thy splendid deeds, my Maximus.
I'll think of thee when my swift steed's quick rush
Doth overmatch the cunning of the hare . . .
When with thy friends I ride behind the hounds,
When hinds we trap, tangled in subtle snares,
And the wild boar that's native to our plains
We chase . . . When thine old bailiff loudly claims
The finest stag as his own perquisite,
I'll think of thee, nor grudge it for thy sake . . .

I know the very place where I would live:
That hollow in the hills near Gegio
In the Asturian Highlands wild and free;
Thy Granddam's land beyond our Tarracon,
Our summer home, near the great Western Sea,
Where merry chuckling imps of mischief come
To beg for pennies . . . In the woods their home . . .
The children are they of wild foresters
Who know no laws and live in savage state,
Healthy, unconquered, free as is the air . . .

Think not I should be lonely in that dale,
If other guests I lacked I would call in
My huntsman Arcos . . . Genial, honest soul!
I mind me well he loved thee as a boy . . .
'Twas he helped us to kill our first wild boar . . .
A big one, Magnus! Dost remember, lad?
And there are neighbours 'mongst the farmers round
Whom I like well . . . I shall not need at all
Town-dress or toga . . . Moon-embroidered shoes
I will not think on . . . Scented dyes I'll throw
Unto the dogs! The gloomy Courts, my friend,
See'st thou? I shall not need to e'er attend . . .
No keeping guard before the Emperor's door . . .
No wakeful nights, no bivouac in the mud,
No cities need I sack; nor in cold blood
Burn looted towns; nor homesteads, granges, barns,
Of the poor country-folk need I destroy;
Nor slaughter hapless peasants in their beds . . .
No . . . no! My friend . . . Nor would I willingly
Sit on Tribunals where grim ushers wait
To shew in clients full of heavy woes . . .
Women and children pleading tearfully,
Or greedy shrews claiming the mastery,
And lying rascals who are rankest thieves,
And honest men proved murderers wrongfully . . .

All these I will avoid, nor hear the sigh
Of the pale criminal condemned to die;
The piteous shrieks, the horrid screams and yells
Of those who for their crimes must bear the rack,
Or taste the burning pain of rods or scourge . . .
'Twould mar my rest . . . I love not judging men . . .
I care not for the empty praise of fools,
Nor for the vain applause of flatterers . . .
I am too lazy . . . I would rather sleep
Than rise betimes to seek such thankless tasks.
I could be happy in a simple life
With moderate means. I need not, want not Fame.
Let others win it and repent; while I
Live on my little farmstead peacefully,
And let the weary restless World roll by . . .

That's my ideal life, dear Maximus!
Nor would I give it up were I to own
The Seven Hills of great Imperial Rome
And proud Byzantium's Cupolas to boot!
I hate the noise and bustle of the Town . . .

Now will I tell thee what my heart desires
More than Earth's Cities, rich though they may be . . .
A little villa, set amidst the hills,

Whence I may catch a glimpse of the blue sea,[17]
Around it bay-trees, and, in clumps, some planes,
With silver firs that reach unto the skies . . .
Flower-beds with lilies and red roses decked,
Wide grassy paths with violets bespread,
And golden crocuses, and all such herbs
As are sweet-scented to perfume the air.
Nor would I banish any luxury
In moderation . . . I would make good cheer . . .
I would have baths fit for my friends to use,
Not one alone, but a great company;
And columns tall, five score at least, and 'neath the feet
Fine coloured marbles that the sunbeams may
Weave patterns there to please my closing eyes
As I lie dozing in the Portico . . .
And I would have a well-planned Hippodrome,
A riding-school, where I should hear the thud
Of flying hooves of steeds that I have bred,
Ready to mount whenever I have need . . .
And fountains in the courts and gardens should[18]
Have water ever flowing, murmuring soft
Sweet music in my sleeping ears; and fair
Long vista of wide corridors I'd have,

[17] Pliny the Younger, II. 17, Martial, XII. 1.

[18] Pliny the Younger, Letters, V. 6.

And avenues of every kind of tree . . .
All gentle soothing sounds of country life . . .
The cooing of wood-doves, the hum of bees,
The soft and balmy breeze amidst the leaves;
These would I have to please my happy soul . . .
Nor would I, be thou sure, neglect to make
A little, cosy, most delightful nook[19]
Wherein to sup, to read awhile a book,
To lie at ease and dream, to doze in peace . . .
Though I'm no scholar and confess, my friend,
I'd rather ride to hounds than wield a pen . . .
Yet I do read a little now and then . . .
Thou see'st, Maximus, that I know well
My Martial and my Pliny, e'en as thou;
Nor have forgotten in these Northern Climes
The pleasures of our well-loved Southern home . . .

But why art thou so gloomy, so depressed?
Art thou not wedded to a Lady sweet,
Most lovely, wise, and prudent? Hast thou not
Those bonny bairns that lisping call thee Sire?
Thou lucky dog! What more dost thou desire?
And sure if thou wouldst fight are there not feuds,
Outbreaks enough, and many a border war

[19] Martial, XII. 1.

To keep thy sword from rusting? In thy hand
Is set this Isle of Britain . . . All the North,
From Humber's flood to the far frontier Wall
Of Antoninus, will be 'neath thy sway . . .
My Father tells me thou art to be Duke,
And keep the Saxons and the Northmen out,
Chastise the Scots, restrain the wily Picts.
Why, thou'lt dwell here in York, this splendid Town,
And have two Legions under thy command . . .
While I have nothing . . . Am but Tribune still . . .
Thou canst not envy me! '' Said Maximus,
'' Nay, Comrade . . . But I would that thou wert left
Count of all Britain, or that I were so . . .
I love Dulcitius not, his arrogance . . .
His harshness . . . And then I . . . Oh, I am tied . . .
I have no power . . . Dulcitius over me,
And Civilis the Vicar . . . In his hands
Lies the true Government . . . The Civil Power . . .
And over us is set another still,
Florentius, who, as Prefect of all Gaul,[20]
Can ruin us at will . . . What chance have I? ''

Said Theodosius laughing, '' Comrade, fie!
Art thou thus greedy and wouldst grasp the whole?

[20] Amm. Marcell. XXVII. 7 (7).

Rest satisfied . . . Remember thy dear friend . . .
What is his name? . . . Oh, Andragathius . . . gets
The post of Count of all the Saxon shore . . .
Ye two can hold your own 'gainst all the rest,
He is a man who ne'er appealed to me,
Yet is he a fine leader of Light Horse . . .
I grant thee that . . . and a good swordsman too . . .
Natheless he knows but little of the sea,
Though he must now command the Channel Fleet . . .
He has a hungry sullen look, is sly
And over-cruel . . . Yet he doth love thee . . .
As all the Army does, dear Maximus . . .

Farewell, my Father calls . . . I must be gone . . .
When we next meet, who knows what may have
chanced?
I will not fail to serve thee as I can . . .
Thou shalt rise higher yet . . . Then, in thy might,
Forget not thine old friend, my Maximus."

My Master stood some moments motionless,
His face shewed plainly signs of his great grief.
Sighing he turned, then saw me where I stood
Outside the open door that access gave
Unto the Corridor. He had told me

To wait his orders there; I had obeyed.
Cried he, " What, thou! Hast thou heard all we said?
Why wert thou there? Didst spy on me, my lad? . . .
Nay, I forgot . . . I bade thee wait my word . . .
Quintus, forget what thou to-day hast heard . . .
I trust thee, boy . . . I know thou lov'st thy Lord . . .
Go! Fetch my horse round . . . I will ride with them
Down to the River-Gate, and see the last
Of my best friend . . . Ah! Theodosius!
Shall we two ever meet again? Who knows?
Who knows? . . Perchance ere that shall come to pass,
I'll challenge Fate and throw a main with Death! "

ADVENTURE XXIII.

How Maximus rode from York to the Castle of Aber Sain and sojourned there awhile; and how Helen the Queen was fain of him and would keep him by her side—How she sang and what the Centurion Lucian thought of her singing.

Not long had Theodosius our great General gone
Than trouble fell again upon this Realm.
Rumours of war were rife; conspiracy
Was smould'ring in the North, and everywhere
Sedition reared anew her venomous head.
Yet also 'tween the Picts and Scots was strife;
Dissension marred their plots and spoiled their might.
At this time Maximus avoided all
Quarrel or argument with those high Lords
Who were with him appointed to bear rule
Over the Realm of Britain. Little cause
Had he to love Dulcitius, who e'er shewed
A cold contempt towards the Asturian;
Urged, maybe, by some private jealousy,
Because the elder Theodosius prized
The worth and valour of his countryman
Beyond his merits, to the Roman's mind . . .
Civilis shared the Count of Britain's grudge,
Doubting, perchance, the loyalty and truth

Of one in whose veins ran wild British blood;
Who every day gained power; who had, it seemed,
Won the devoted love of all who served
Beneath his standard. Maximus himself
Felt that he was by these two officers
Distrusted and disliked; for which cause he
Kept to his own domain; there wisely ruled,
Keeping the Northern Border well in hand,
But not neglecting his own land of Wales.

About the time when Christian men observe
The Feast of good Saint John, and the Celts keep
The Summer Solstice, praising Mabon's Name,
Maximus rode from York unto Caer Saint[1]
To pass the Festival with his fair Queen,
There to hold Court and there make merry cheer.
Now at this time came welcome guests to Wales,
Lately come o'er the seas from distant Spain:
The Lady Maxima, that noble Dame,
Mother of Maximus; and her second son
Young Marcellinus with his Uncle came,
Marinus, brother of the dead Trahern
And Leolin, of old King Coël's Line.

[1] Caer Saint = *Segontium* (Caernarvon).

My Lord had hoped to take his solace here
And pastime make, freed for a while from care;
But little pleasure Fate allotted him,
Henceforth full dark and dreary grew his way . . .
Right hard and difficult his course to steer!

I mind me how we rode that summer day
O'er the soft turf; the sun, declining, lost
Its fiery heat, the evening breeze blew cool . . .
Our horses frisking pranced and lively sprang,
Pulling against their bits. Our road led down[2]
Through a steep valley, broken each short while
By rough descent and ascent . . . Climbing, we
Must fare amongst the boulders. This deep vale
Looked arid, stony, barren to the eye;
Yet here is a rich soil, and all this land
Bears most abundant produce; so we learned
From Meirchon Gul, the son of Gwrwst Ledhom,
Young Cynvarch's father . . . He whom ye all know
As Sire of Urien Rheghed . . . Cynvarch[3] came
With his two brethren, Elidyr the Brave
And Lyr Marin, to meet our retinue.

[2] Cf. Gir. Cambr. *Itin. Wales*, Bk. II. ch. 6, Camden, *Britannia* (Carnarvonshire).

[3] Cf. Mabinogion, *French trans.* ed. Loth. (Index).

Old Meirchon rode, a stately grey-haired Chief,
At the right hand of my Lord Maximus . . .
Long had he dwelt in York, the Romans' guest . . .
His sons the Viceroy and their Sire with joy
Humbly saluted, low they bent the knee,
So brought us on our way unto the Burgh.
And now we saw the Isle of Mona lie
Across the narrow channel of the sea.
Pleasant its golden sands gleamed in the sun,
Lovely its wooded coasts, though here and there
A marshy traeth[4] cleft that fair fertile shore,
Whose reedy pools and quaking bogs safe hid
Great wealth of wild-fowl. O'er the ridges low
Thousands of peewits swooping whirled and cried
With plaintive voices on each side the strait . . .
Like ghosts of the dead Druids of this Isle,
Whom Suetonius and his soldiers slew
E'en in the midst of their curst hellish rites
And rolled them in their fires, so seemed these birds,
That sadly wailing hovered circling round
And flutt'ring screamed about our horses' heads.
Prince Meirchon said, " See'st thou far in the West
The setting sun yet gilds the crystal domes
Of Aber-ffraw? 'Tis there, my Lord, that thou

[4] traeth = morass.

Shouldst hold thy Court; for there lies the great dun
Where for long ages past have dwelt and ruled
The Lords of Cambria.''[5] Then said Maximus,
'' I heard Octavius, the late King, did set
That palace in thy hands, O Meirchon Gul!
Content am I to dwell in Aber Sain,
Where my dear Queen and Consort first drew breath;
Where she and I first met; where, I have heard,
Great Constantine himself oft chose to dwell,
That from his name is called Caer Custennin;[5A]
Where lie the bones of Constant,[6] his famed Sire . . .
It is a Castle that I much admire,
Nor have I need of other burgh than this . . .
But I will come to Aber-ffraw, my Lord,
As guest when thou wilt have me . . . Now shalt thou
Come as mine honoured friend unto my Burgh . . .
Segontium loves thy House, so I have heard '' . . .
Prince Meirchon smiled, well pleased, and we rode on
By[7] rough and rocky ways and wooded vales,
While here and there great marshy pools wide lay
Athwart our pathway, that unguided we
Had never crossed; and sure no army might

[5] Northern Wales.

[5A] Nennius, ch. 7, says *Caer Custeint*, i.e. Constantius.

[6] Matthew of Westminster, A.D. 1283.

[7] Cf. Camden, *Brit.* (Caernarvonshire) p. 667.

Essay that passage, unless marching light
And with right faithful guides . . . The craggy rocks,
Rent with huge fissures, and the high bare hills
Seemed no less steep than are the Italian Alps.
Now these same barren hills compass about
One lofty mountain that o'ertops the rest,
Towering aloft, his crest reared in the air,
As though not merely he would awe the sky,
But thrust his head e'en into highest Heaven;
And he, and others of his fellows near,
Harboured the snow; all hoary they appeared
As with the crust of many winters' snows . . .
Yet not all barren,[8] for their southern slopes
Were covered with rich grass that groweth rank,
Enough to pasture all the kine in Wales.
Now this great mountain higher than the rest
Is named Eryri, as maybe ye know,
Which is called Snowdon in the Saxon tongue;
And it doth hide upon its flanks strange things . . .
Two deep meres lie thereon, in one of which
Floateth a wandering Isle, where Swan-maids go
To rest them, I have heard, and weave new robes
Of Swan-plumes when they need them; and men say,
Though I know not if true, the other lake

[8] Gir. Cambr. *Itin. Wales*, Bk. II. ch. IX.

Is filled with plenteous store of fishes fine,
Great eels and trout and perch, yet all of these
Go lacking their left eyes, a curious thing,
And wherefore I know not, nor can I guess,
Unless it be some curse God set on them,
Who maybe once were wicked sons of men
Made fishes, and half blinded for their sins!

Our way beguiled by idle tales like these
We rode at ease along that upland ridge,
Marking the summer sea lap on the sands,
Its ripping wavelets curling round the cliffs
And rock-bound nesses of the Cambrian shore.
Just ere the sun went down we came to where
A point of land juts out into the strait,
Here but a mile in width . . . There the Seiont
Doth join the Menai, and their waters flow
Together to the sea. Upon this spur,
On the north bank of Seiont's noble stream,
Standeth the Castle[9] Maxen saw in dream,
That fortress strong still known as Aber Sain.
In olden days another burgh stood high,
Reared by some British King long time agone

[9] Cf. Mabinogion (*Maxen's Dream*), Gir. Cambrensis, *Itin*, ch. VI., Matt. of Westminster, *A.D. 1283*.

Whose name was Gwydion, so the sages tell,
Whom some call Seon, others Segomo,[10]
And say he was no earthly King but ruled
In Gaulish lands as the bold God of War . . .
This burgh still stands upon the bare hill-top,
Above the Cadnant's rushing rivulet,
Upon its eastern bank. The ancient dun . . .
Toot Hill 'tis yet called in the Cambrian tongue[11] . . .
Had been repaired and served as fortalice
To guard the northern valley . . . To the south,
The further side of Cadnant's stream, there rose
A wooded hill, steep on its seaward side,
Llanbeblig called. On its wide summit stood,
A little lower than old Gwydion's dun,
That looked down on it from the opposite hill,
The Roman Camp that is Segontium . . .
And on the ridge beneath stood Aber Sain,
King Eudav's Castle called, but all men know
Constantius built it and by Constantine
'Twas made yet greater . . . From this lower ridge,
Where Seiont flows to join the Menai flood . . .
I saw with wonder Aber Sain's tall spires
Soared higher than the high-walled Roman Camp.

[10] Cf. Stevenson, Appendix II. *Segontium* (Cymmrodor, Vol. XXXIII.).

[11] Twt Hill.

I gazed awhile upon Segontium,
I marvelled at the whiteness of its walls,
The ruddy-coloured turrets pleased me well,
The two great sandstone towers that stood north-east
Shone rosy red as sank the dying sun . . .
Said to me Publius, next to whom I rode,
Who ever was right friendly on the march . . .
" Well, youngster! Say! What thinkst thou of Caer Saint?[12]
Much has been added since Lord Maximus
Rode here to see his Queen . . . He gave the word
And had the plans made . . . She hath seen to it,
Aye, and made good the roads throughout North Wales[13] . . .
She hath ta'en order, hath our bonny Queen,
I know not why some grumble," muttered he,
" At good Queen Helen, for she seems to me
A noble Lady, gentle, amiable,
Courteous and kind, yet dignified withal
As doth befit the wife of Maximus . . .
This road we ride on is Sarn Helen called[13A]

[12] Cf. Cymmrodor, XXXIII., Wheeler, *Segontium.*

[13] Cf. *Maxen's Dream* (Mabinogion).

[13A] But Sarn Helen some say means *Sarn y Lleng*, Road of the Legion.

To honour her fair name . . . But look, my lad!
Not at the Castle—but up there behind . . .
See'st thou our splendid Camp? Beyond that scarp
There run two double ditches and a bank . . .
Mark the high walls and yonder lofty tower
That guards the North-East Gateway . . . Good new stone,
'Twill stand, I warrant, when we're dead and gone!
The First Cohort of Sùnici lies there,
Enrolled in Belgium many years ago . . .
Their Commandant is an old friend of mine;
He knew my father well . . . Julius his name . . .
Julius Licinulus Vitalis, he
Whose brother Lucian was Vexillifer[14]
And bare the Twentieth Legion's Charging Boar
Till he was raised to be Centurion
And now rides with th' Asturians, to our cost,
As First Decurion . . . Would he did not!
Too harsh and strict is honest Lucian
To suit the Spanish Horse . . . Yonder thou'lt see
One of the best men in the Sùnici . . .
Old Sabinianus is on duty still . . .
The Quarter-master[15] . . Thou shouldst hear his tales . .

[14] Cf. Earwaker, *Chester*, pp. 114-115.

[15] i.e. *Actarius*. Cf. Wheeler, *Segontium*, p. 126.

He makes your blood boil hot and then run cold
With his wild stories of the Border wars;
He'll tell thee how a century ago
The Sùnici were here 'neath the command
Of his own grandsire. Then Fulgentius came . . .
The British rebel of some Royal Line . . .
He stormed the outer fort . . . but our brave men
Held the Praetorium though they were but few . . .
Severus had withdrawn the most of them
To send them to some post on Hadrian's Wall . . .
Then those in the small fort, as it was then,
That now is Aber Sain so great and tall,
Sent troops to help them . . . Seiont was in flames,
The civil lines destroyed . . . The walls breached
through . . .
But now our Romans rallied and beat off
The rebel Chief Fulgentius and his crew
Who fled into the hills ere brake the dawn . . .
But battered stayed the outer towers and walls
For many years . . . Now all has been restored . . .
By Count Theodosius' orders[15A] . . . Thou shalt see
How fairly it is done, and mark thou well
The frescoes in the new Praetorium,
And the great Reservoir that has been made,

[15A] i.e. Theodosius the Elder, Count of Britain.

And the fine baths that lie without the walls . . .
Lord Maximus planned all nor spared he gold . . .
And much was done to Aber Sain as well . . .
The Twentieth sent a vexillation down
Of their most skilled artificers, and they
Had double rations with their extra pay,
As they deserved . . . I know what hard work means . . .
I took a hand in building up those walls.
We built Caervyrddin Castle afterwards[15B] . . .
The Legate likes to hunt there . . . Close at hand
On top of high Breir Vawr we pitched his tent
And Cadeir Maxen 'tis called to this day . . .
He hunted while we worked . . Aye, moiled like slaves . .
A myriad of us toiled 'neath sun and rain '' . . .
He shrugged his shoulders somewhat ruefully,
Remembering his enforcèd drudgery
When he, degraded, served as munifex[15C] . . .
Then said he laughing, ''Ah! 'Twas well worth while . . .
Quintus! No rebel Briton ere again
Shall break in on our strong Segontium!
That curst Fulgentius''—''Hush, Sir!'' whispered I,

[15B] Cf. *Maxen's Dream*, Mabinog. ed. Loth, I. p. 223; Caervyrddin = Caermyrddin, later Carmarthen (Maridunum) Ptol. II. 3.

[15C] See Vol. III., p. 220.

" See'st not who rideth near? 'Tis Erof Graeme,
Our harsh Decurion, he may hear thy words;
And he is kin to him I will not name . . .
Though sure he is no rebel, Sir . . . Thou know'st
What he did at Alclwyd . . . Our Lord loves him " . . .
Quoth Publius hastily, " I thank thee, lad " . . .
He muttered in my ear in sulky tones,
" Erof the Cumbrian has no love for me
Nor I for him . . . He spared me not one task,
One extra duty, when as munifex
I served my turn . . . I was his orderly
For a short time . . . Cold-blooded heartless swine . . .
He never struck me . . I had killed him straight . . .
But his sharp tongue, the sneer on his curled lips,
The scorn in his dark eyes, all mocked my shame . . .
I hate him heartily although he be " . . .
Said Graeme that moment very suddenly,
With a keen look at Publius, " Duplicar!
Keep order in the ranks . . . No talking there!
What means this folly and why chatter ye?
Come not to mess, Sir! Take thy meals apart
Until I bid thee . . . Hast no discipline?
An my Lord Maxen knew this then once more
Thou'd ride as private trooper, so beware!
I've seen Centurions broke and flogged for less . . .

Thou, Liticen! Ride forward! Dost not see
The Legate waits thee . . . Thou'rt too slack, my lad!
To-night to the Camp Prefect make report,
And tell him thy Decurion wishes thee
To take six extra watches . . . So . . . Pass on! ''
I did, and cursed him privily and low,
I felt with Publius that I hated him . . .

My Lord looked at me kindly, nor seemed he
To notice aught amiss in my flushed face . . .
'' Quintus! '' said he, '' be ready at my word
To sound the Summons . . . See, we near my Burgh . . .
Oh, look well at it, boy! Ne'er shalt thou see
A fairer Palace in the whole wide world
Than Aber Sain, dear Castle of my dreams . . .
Dost thou remember it when first we came
Together riding through its Golden Door?
Now is it thrice more glorious than before!
Dost thou not think so, lad? '' I raised mine eyes
And gazed where Maxen pointed . . . Then I said,
Filled with great wonder, '' Legate, of a truth
Thy Castle shews more beauty than of yore . . .
Thou hast worked marvels, Lord, since I was here;
I feel that we still ride within a dream,
And dread lest all should vanish as the mist

Of night 'fore risen sun . . . It looks not real . . .
Sure 'tis a Castle of charmed Fantasy,
Builded by Elves, wherein the Faeries bide '' . . .
Whereat laughed Maximus merrily and swore
That dream or no dream he asked naught beside
Than to possess this Burgh for evermore . . .

How can I bring its beauty 'fore your eyes
Who ne'er may see its like? . . . For now it lies
In danger, so I hear, on every hand
To be destroyed by cursèd Pagans' spite . . .
Its lovely bowers, its mighty walls, its towers
Threatened by treachery . . . Yet doth it stand
As though a Palace builded for the Gods
That should with them share immortality!

Upon a ridge raised up above the town[16]
A lofty rock doth rise from out the Strait,
Its base washed on two sides by Menai's waves;
The Castle's third wall looks down on the Seiont;
Its other flank, ringed in by a deep moat,
Frowns o'er the town of Arvon. Of huge size

[16] The description of the Castle is partly taken from the Castles of Caernarvon and Conway, partly from Berg Finckenstein (cf. Schultz, I. pp. 15, 17), partly from *Maxen's Dream (Mabinogion).*

This mighty stronghold is; right great and grim
Its many massive towers rise up, I swear,
Two hundred feet or more above the tide;
Of limestone and of marble are they made,
Ten feet are they in thickness I have heard,
Twelve towers all told, besides the central Keep.
And wondrous fair are those same towers to see;
Eight-sided are they, and from them there spring
Slender and graceful turrets soaring high,
Two to each tower, but one of them has three . . .
This is known as the Eagle's Keep, and sure
Its height doth mark it as an eyrie safe
Beyond the reach of every envious foe;
For never siege-ladder that wall may span,
Nor any adversary break within
By dint of mangonel or petrarie,
So high and strong is it. This keep appears
As though by giants' hands it had been raised . . .
A plaything of the Titans of old days . . .
It rises from the apex of the mound,
A mass of masonry, that sloping curves
Inwards some little, then soars sheer and bold
As if 'twould scale the stars . . . A buttress-tower
Clings to the centre of its western flank,
Paired by another reared high on the East;

Within each tower a vice, or spiral stair,
Gives access to each loop-holed, bratticed tier.
I marked with interest how in every row
Of loopholes was an archway, and from them
Huge cranes swung out, whereby to hoist up stores,
Or hang a criminal or captured spy;
Or from their platforms boiling pitch to pour
Upon the heads of those who would essay
To take the Keep by some rash escalade.
Upon the summit of that Tower four-square
Eight turrets tall appeared, and also spires
Of slender, most fantastic minarets;
And quaintly gabled roofs as of a town
Peeped o'er its battlements, beneath which shewed
The deeply-cut machicolations that
O'erhung the walls of this strange-fashioned Keep . . .
A sight no Roman e'er before had seen,
Shaped in another manner than their own
Strong castles that they raise to awe the world.
'Tis told Constantius when he built this Burgh
Employed an architect not of this Earth . . .
A demon of the deep he did compel
By some resistless charm and secret spell
To rear this Tower, and, it is said, within
Its strong foundations masons did enclose

Three hapless captives, who by their slow death
Ensured the long duration of the walls . . .
He was not Christian man, and had small care
Of human life, as is the way of Kings . . .

Let that be as it may, this Keep appears
A Wonder of the World and yet doth stand.
When it doth fall a prophecy I've heard
That a yet stronger burgh shall take its place[17]
Built by a mighty King of Northern race,
Who shall be conqueror of the Cambrian Land.
Yet in his wisdom this King shall proclaim
That he will give the Realm and Folk of Wales
Into the charge of a Prince native-born,
Who shall the light of day first see within
This Castle of Caer Seiont that men shall name
Caernarvon henceforth, and this Prince shall be
The Heir of Britain and the Lord of Wales . . .
Yet have I also heard from Taliessin,[18]
Strange Bard who makes yet stranger prophecies,
This of the Brython Race . . . from which I spring
Whose Mother was a noble Lloegrian dame . . .

[17] The Castle of Caernarvon begun by Edw. I. in 1283; Clarke, *Med. Mil. Arch.* I. 312.

[18] Cf. Nash, *Taliesin*, 162, 304; Elton, 2nd ed. 248.

‘ That they shall praise the Lord,’ ’twas thus he sang,
‘ Their Language they shall keep, yet lose their Land,
All save Wild Wales . . That shall be theirs alway’ . .
And I believe those words of Taliessin . . .
Bard, Wizard, Devil . . . Be he whom he may!

Within a curtain-wall the Castle stands,
And eke the Town is girdled by high walls.
Two Gate-Houses both broad and tall I saw
With flanking towers that rise up proud and bold.
We entered by that noble Portal called
The Emperor’s Gate-House, in the centre placed,
Facing the Town. Recessed the Archway stood,
Approached by a great drawbridge, that was soon
Lowered at our approach, as loud the horns
Of Meirchon sounded, and our trumpets pealed
Forth notice of our coming. We rode in
Beneath the vaulted Portal, high and wide,
With branching ribs well-moulded, and o’erhead
Within a niche we saw the statue stand,
Larger than life, of th’ Emperor Constantine . . .
The son of Constant who lies buried here . . .
In war-gear, as his wont, of burnished steel,
Upon his war-horse set, his sword in hand,
His crested helm on head . . . A stately form . . .

Now with great joy came fair Queen Helen down,
And with her Lady Maxima the Wise,
And other noble dames and gallant Lords,
To greet the Roman Legate, who was hailed
As Helen's Consort by the people there . . .
The Townsfolk and the Castle Garrison . . .
Sweet was the greeting 'tween that loving pair,
Who sore had lacked each other's company.
Fair was that sight and comely then to see
How Maximus right humbly bent his knee
Before his Mother . . . Long years had they been
Sundered and kept apart . . . His eyes were wet
As that proud Dame bent over his bared head
And gave her son her blessing . . . He rose up,
Held her a moment in his arms, then turned
To grasp his brother's hand . . Few words they spake . .
Said Lady Maxima, "At last, dear son,
Once more I see thy face . . . Oh! It still shews
Thy boyhood's gracious lineaments, my son . . .
Yet something changed . . . Look in mine eyes awhile
That I may scan thee well . . . Ah! now I see
Thy Father's look . . . Though sterner than his wont . . .
Thou smilest, Magnus? Now I know that thou
Hast changèd not at all." Said Maximus,
" Never to thee, I hope, dear Mother mine,

"Maximus greets his mother."

(See page 372.)

Shall I be aught but thine own loving son . . .
Why, Marcellinus! Joy it is to see
Thy lean brown face again! Thou art not changed,
I swear, dear lad . . . Nor shalt thou find in me
Less love than we had ever 'tween us two . . .
God! It is good to have thee by the hand!

My Helen! Wilt thou that we go within?
I have so much to tell thee, and would fain
Hear from thy sweet rose lips, my lovely Queen,
All that I see thou longest to impart . . .
O Helen! Empress of my loving heart!
Bring me within . . . Freed from these travel-stains
I long to be . . . Then let us swiftly go
To that fair secret orchard where we two
Sat in the summer weather long ago . . .
That garden of delight where none shall come
To spoil our pleasure . . . Let Affairs of State,
The Business of the Realm our leisure wait . . .
We will be busy, Love, with greater things
Than those dull cares that mar the peace of Kings . . .
I see my children running . . . Look! They rush
To greet their Father . . . Gently! Pretty ones!
What, Gwythyr! Wouldst thou wear this helm of
mine? . . .

Alas! It is too heavy, little son . . .
My sword-belt far too wide for thee to clutch . . .
Fret not! Thou shalt ride Brutus, and with thee
Thy sister . . . Hold tight! So, Sevira . . . So!
What! Cystennin and Owain[19] . . . Ye'd ride too?
Ye little rogues . . . Aye, ye have captured me . . .
I am your prisoner . . . Have then your will . . .
My Lords! Hold me excused . . . Love, let us go
And for a few brief hours forget the world . . .
Take order, Andragathius! Arbogast!
Quintilianus, Prefect of the Camp,
See to the troops . . . I'll take a holiday . . .
My Mother, come! '' She shook her head and smiled,
" Seek me another time, my son . . . Now go
Unto thine orchard '' . . . Laughing, he obeyed.

All those long summer evening hours he spent
Taking his pleasure with his little ones;
When they unwilling went to rest he stayed
With his sweet Queen and joy they had enow . . .
I heard her sing in gentle voice and low
As I passed by the Orchard-close to go
On guard as was my turn; and in my heart

[19] Gwythyr, Cystennin and Owain = Victor, Constantine and Eugenius.

I felt great pity for my Lady rise,
Who loved so well one who, by chance of war,
Too often must be absent from her side.
Loitering, I stood to listen to her song . . .
The river running by as rose the tide
Rippled soft echo, lapping 'gainst the wall . . .
And I forgot all else the while she sang:

O Love! Why wilt thou not this once stay by me?
If thou dost love me why must thou depart?
Am I not fair, and thine? Why then wouldst fly me?
Alas! Hast thou no pity in thy heart?

See, I have kept thy letters, Dear, beside me . . .
In kissing them I hoped some solace find
For my lost joy . . . Thou smil'st? Then thou'lt not chide me
That I refuse to loose thee from my mind.

Where thy hand touched the page there my lips rested,
It seemed to me that hand then pressed mine own . .
Mine eyes, though dim with weeping, yet attested
Where thy name stood . . I felt thus less alone . .

That semblance faint, naught else, has helped relieve me
In many a weary hour . . . O Love, why roam?
Thou mayst find others fairer . . . Ah! Believe me
None love thee more than I . . . Sweet! Stay at home!

Say'st thou that duty calls thee far? Ah, no, Love!
Thy duty surely is to these sweet pledges here . . .
Let others fare abroad to fight the foe, Love!
Stay thou at home and guard thy children dear.

No other chains have I wherewith to bind thee,
Nor would I hold thee, Dear, against thy will . . .
Yet Love, my Love! Where thinkest thou to find thee
So fond a heart as mine in good or ill?

Dost thou crave Fame so much that thou canst leave me?
Alas, dear Heart! Wouldst thou thy true Love harm?
Without thee I must die . . . Would that not grieve thee?
Ah! Hold me close, sweet Love, with thy strong arm . . .

So shall we pass the years in joy together . . .
Let others rule the World . . Thy Kingdom's here!
Safe in our faithful love if we thus weather
The stormy sea of life, naught need we fear.

Her soft voice ceased . . . I turned and would have gone . . .
Tears filled mine eyes . . . Oh! I was very young
And simple-hearted in those days, my friends . . .
I lingered still, when on my shoulder fell

A heavy blow . . . " What dost thou, loitering here?
Dost not know thou art late, thou curst young rogue?
Do double guard to-night, and for a month
Sleep thou outside thy quarters 'neath the stars . . .
Without thy blanket, mind thee, on the ground . . .
Nor with thy comrades mess, but eat alone!
By Mithra's Bull! Thou may'st thank those same stars
Thou gettest off so lightly . . . Now, quick march! "
'Twas Lucian spake, our grim Centurion,
Who at that time rode with the Asturian Horse . . .
I had no words, with hanging head I passed,
And as I went I heard his scornful voice,
I saw his sneering face . . . " Jove's Wrath! " He swore,
And followed on my heels, the while he dealt
Several sharp blows about my shoulder-blades
With his long supple vine-staff . . . How it stung! . . .
" Does her sweet voice beguile thee too, young fool?
'Tis time this folly ceased . . . An Maximus
Doth once again lie cradled in her arms,
And, smothered in the swaddling-bands of love,
Let thus a woman rule his destiny . . . Why then
There is no hope for him, nor yet for us,
And all our plans will fall in ruin . . . Pah!
Pest on her pretty ways! . . . I'd harm her not,

But we'll not let a woman spoil our game . . .
Take that! And this! . . . Confound the staff! 'Tis
broke . . .
Bid Tertius bring another, boy! Dost hear?
When thou relievest him . . . And, mark me well!
This Queen must learn to know that Fate prepares
Another path for Maximus than hers . . .
'Tis not by Love that he shall conquering rule,
Reward his faithful soldiers and become
Master of all the World, as, by the Gods!
We mean he shall . . . Go thou, my son!
See that another time thou art more prompt,
For thou shalt take thy share of discipline
As well as others, though a Provost's son . . .
And, hark thee, Sirrah! Maximus has said
The next man late on duty gets the rods!
I've let thee off to-night . . . Next time, beware! ''
I answered not, but made a smart salute,
And at the double hurried to the walls . . .
Right well I knew that Lucian kept his word . . .
Oh! He was strict and stern and quick to strike . . .
Behind his back we called him jestingly
Old '*Cedo Alteram*!'[20] For he oft brake
His vine-staff on our backs, then roaring called,

[20] Tacitus, *Annals*, Bk. I. (23).

" Bring me another ! " Yet in spite of that
He was well known to be a gallant man,
In action prompt and ready, who would shew
A kindly heart to those who followed him,
And praise their deeds and treat them brotherly . . .
Oft have I seen our harsh, stern officer
Dismount in haste to help a wounded man,
Giving him drink and gently raising him,
So bear him from the field . . . Aye, not so bad
Was Lucian at his best . . . Thus, spite the pain
And anger that I felt, I took the blame
That I deserved and soon I thought no more
Of his sharp words . . . Yet in my mind I turned
What he had said of Helen, our fair Queen,
Nor knew I what to think . . . I held my peace,
Saying no word thereof to Maximus,
Lest I should raise a storm that none might quell.

ADVENTURE XXIV.

How Maximus held a Court of Justice at Aber Sain—How he received the Exiles from Rome and Byzantium—How Conan Meriadoc brought him news from the North concerning a Conspiracy against the Roman Power, and told him how the Relics of Saint Andrew had been brought to Otholyneum.[1]

Now on the morrow Maximus must hold
Court as was customary. He went down
From out the Castle into Seiont Town . . .
With his full train, escorted by his guards,
Riding along the narrow streets he passed,
Mounting by winding graduated ways
Unto the Fort we called Segontium
That overlooks the Town. In the Great Hall
Of the Praetorium came he pacing slow
And took his seat in regal state at dawn.

As Legate of the Emperor he wore
The Senatorial toga, white and fine,
That marked his rank by its broad crimson band;[1A]
And scarlet leather four-strapped high-soled boots,

[1] Otholyn (*Athfodla, Adtheodle*) apparently included Fife and also Atholl in Perthshire, two Celtic Provinces. Cf. Skene, *C. Scotland* III. 43, and Boece (trans. Stewart) III. (*Index*).

[1A] Laticlavius.

By gilded crescents clasped, he had drawn on
That none but men of high estate may don.
As Viceroy of the British Queen he wore
A golden circlet shaped in cunning wise
Like to a wreath of bay-leaves that appeared
As it were an Imperial Crown; and in his hand
The ivory Staff of Office that was twined
With golden vine-leaves held he.
The great Chair,
On the Tribunal set as though a throne,
Of carven gold was fashioned; on its arms
Two gilded eagles perched, and on its back
A rampant lion open-jawed was reared.
Behind this Chair there stood Apparitors
And soldiers of the Guard, and on each side
The Lictors, twelve in number, who appeared
In scarlet cloaks and fair white tunics garbed.
Each man of them on his left shoulder held
The *fasces*, emblem of the State's high power
O'er life and limb . . . Long elm-rod bundles these,
Bound by red straps, that in their centres gripped
Sharp axes of bright steel . . . The blades exposed . . .
Securæ are these named, and rightly so,
That by their aid unto the State secure
Justice and safety, and to wrong-doers

Bring fear of death . . .
These Lictors one by one
Marched on before the Legate as he strode
Unto the Judgement-Seat in the Great Hall
And took his place, saluted on all sides
By the officials of the Royal Court.
The Adjùtors and Appàritors now ran
To bring the silver Inkstand, and the Bowl[1B]
Wherein petitions lay from many hands . . .
The Chief Clerk laid in solemn silence down
Before the Legate on the oaken board
The golden Reed-case that contained the pens . . .
Symbols of his High Office were these things,
Right featly fashioned, made in cunning wise.
On the right hand of Maximus there sat
Old Meirchon Gul, the Lord of Aber-ffraw,
Chief of the Royal Household; on his left
Judge of the High Court, Meirchon's stately son,
Wise Elidyr Lydanwyn, sire of him
Who e'en as boy was as a singer famed . . .
I mean young Llywarch Hen of Bardic fame,
Known to ye all as warrior well-esteemed.

Now was the sun full risen, and the Court

[1B] Cf. Hodgkin, *Theodoric*, p. 47.

Set all in order due. Cried the Chief Clerk,
Cornicularius by us Romans styled,
Who was Demetrius named, by birth a Greek,
" The Court is opened! Buccinàtors, sound!
Let now the Stationaries forward stand[2]
Prepared to make report, and prosecute
Such prisoners as they here to-day present . . .
Elogia and Notoria hither bring![3]
Charges, Interrogations, Answers writ;
With witnesses and depositions fit
To set before the Legate . . . Questioners,[4]
Stand ready with your necessary tools . . .
Centurions! Usher ye the Suitors in."

Ere the long-rolling echoes of the horns
Had died away came those who had some cause,
Some plea to bring, to urge their lengthy suits . . .
The Stationaries brought as they were bid
Their trembling prisoners; poor fugitives
Whom they had caught escaping from the Law:

[2] Cf. Coote, *Romans of Britain*, pp. 315-331. *Milites Stationarii* = Imperial Police.

[3] Elogium = report, record, or abstract: Notorium, Notoria, or Notaria = written information, indictment.

[4] Torturers.

And their Decurions with ready oaths
Confirmed the depositions, and declared
Such answers and confessions as they'd heard
Wrung from the wretches by the Questioners . .
Maximus heard them all; to each in turn
Gave judgement as was meet: aided thereto
By his Coadjutors upon the Bench.
Many came there and long the weary hours
In which the wranglers pleaded, hundred-tongued;
And many were the points the Judge must know
Ere he gave lawful judgement: Worth of hounds[5] . . .
The lordly greyhound, which when fully trained
Is worth a golden pound; the wandering cur,
Which though a King should own it, worth has none
Save four curt-pence[6] . . And many another breed . .
The shepherd's dog that is worth a good steer,
For he doth go before the kine at dawn,
But guards the hindmost at the close of day . . .
These values well were known to Maximus;
The Game-Laws knew he and the Code of Fines.

I mind me still of one case brought that morn . . .

[5] Wade-Evans *Welsh Med. Law*, V. 15, b. 16, b. 23.

[6] Curt-penny *(Keinhawc cetta)* = Gaulish scripulum = one-third of the Welsh legal penny. 240 curt-pence = one old Roman libra or pound. Cf. Wade-Evans, p. 330.

Here was a wretch by hunger sharp constrained
To steal a slaughtered kid, and he was caught
With flesh and skin thereof upon his back . . .
Quoth Aerlew, Mead-Brewer, " The Kid was mine.
I am the Brewer of the Royal Mead . . .
A dweller in the Court . . . I hold land free
For my good service unto thirsty Kings . . .
From the Queen's Stall my horse is due to me . . .
I am a man of rank and wealth beside . . .
I claim the body of yon rascal thief,
Caught in the act of filching my slain kid.
Three men of mine own status here I bring
Who saw him steal it in the open day.
Saleable thief is he and I now claim
My lawful right, O Viceroy of our Queen! "
Said Maximus, " Centurion! Bring thou forth
The man accused " . . . Lucian obeyed . . . Quoth he,
" My Lord, he standeth here " . . . Said Maximus,
" What is thy name, thy country and thy kin?
State now thy trade or calling, who dost stand
Accused of theft and wanton robbery! "
The culprit spake . . A strong-thewed long-legged lad,
Thin as a pike-staff, lean-faced and half-starved,
Who in a tattered wolf-skin kilt was garbed,
Naught else . . . He answered surlily, head low,

" Morgan my name, a freeman was I born,
The son of Jorwerth, once a falconer
In my Lord Urnach's service, who sits there . . .
Although no Brython, but an Irish Lord,
A stranger in our land, yet has he place
Upon the Bench " . . . He raised his drooping head
And eyed the Irish Noble questingly;
But Urnach looked not on him . . . Said the knave,
" Lord, for this fault my father was dismissed . . .
He lost a hawk out hunting . . . Though next day
He traced and brought her back, he was dismissed . . .
Disgraced and beaten like unruly hound . . .
Sent thus to starve . . . He had no other skill,
Knew naught of any trade save falconry . . .
He took unto the woods, became a thief . . .
My Lord, I own it . . . What choice else had he?
Then, caught one day when venturing near Caer Seiont,
Was hanged . . For what, I know not . . Someone said
He fired a rick . . . It was not proved, fair Sir . . .
Yet I could not claim weregeld for his death . . .
Galanas is not paid to kin of thieves . . .
They told me mockingly I might retain
His chattels by the Law, which does not claim
As reparation from a condemned thief
Aught but his life[7] . . . But what had he to leave

[7] *Welsh Med. Law*, W. 85, b. 2-6.

Save reputation vile his kin to grieve?
My mother and my sisters starve to death . . .
I stole this kid to keep the life in them . . .
I have no other plea " . . . He choking said,
Rubbing his fettered hands across his eyes . . .
Then stood upright, " It is no crime, my Lord,
To save her life who bare me, gave me suck,
Reared me in tender love . . . Can it be wrong
To help the helpless and to succour them
Who are my kin? . . . I asked thy Brewer there
To give me work . . . I begged not . . . But he threw
His drinking-horn at me . . . See here the bruise . . .
'Tis fresh . . . He can't deny it . . . All there saw
How he did maul me, chase me from his door
With threats and blows . . . I fled before his wrath,
And as I ran I snatched from off a hook
The body of a kid but newly slain . . .
They caught me on the plain ere I had gained
The woodland shade, so dragged me to this Court
Where I must bide the penalty of theft . . .
What use am I to any? Hang me then!
But, Lord, I pray thee mercy grant and aid
Unto my mother . . . my poor sisters . . . save!
Ah, Lord! They have done naught that is amiss . . .
Spare them for sake of Christ's sweet charity! "

He ceased, and wrung his fettered hands, then stood
Sullenly waiting. Said then Maximus
With umoved face, with calm cold level voice,
Turning towards his Colleagues on the Bench,
" Lord Urnach, has this youth now spoken truth
As to his father? " Said the wrathful Lord,
In angry mood to be appealed to thus,
" Didst thou address me, Legate? Pardon! I
Thought that mine ears deceived me . . . I believe
I had a careless fellow, Jorwerth called . . .
Or some such name . . . A clumsy stupid lout
Whom I dismissed for lack of service done . . .
I know not what befell him, nor keep I
Such trivial matters in my mind, my Lord . . .
This knave were better hung . . . For of such swine
Are lazy vagabonds too often bred,
And masterless wild rogues . . . That is my rede . . .
I have experience, Legate, of such knaves
Who if unchecked may well prove dangerous."
Said Maximus, " I note thy counsel, Sir " . . . He
turned,
Spake low with Elidyr Lydanwyn, then
Bade the Chief Secretary bring to him
The Roll containing the old Brython Laws . . .
He searched therein; the while Lord Urnach smiled,

Then frowned and bit his nails, flung himself back
And yawning sat . . . The prisoner, wistful eyed,
Gazed through the open doorway whence he spied
The forest not far off that clothed the hills
In green and comely robe . . . The tree-tops waved
Gently in the soft breeze and beckoned him . . .
He stood thus for a space, then, sighing, bowed
His head low on his breast, but spake no word . . .

Said Maximus, at last, " The Law is plain . . .
The father of this youth served a high Lord
Who is a foreigner . . . Therefore these men,
Jorwerth the Falconer, Morgan his son,
Take status from their Lord, though Brythons born . . .
If Jorwerth was an Outlaw, Morgan's none,
Nor hath a man accused him till to-day . . .
The Law here states that needy foreigner
Who shall have been at least three nights and days
Without alms or relief, and could get none
To give him food, so that he, starving, stole,
Urged by sharp hunger; such a one shall be,
Though caught i' the act of stealing, let go free[8] . . .
Free without gallows, prison, scourging, fine . . .
Centurion! Bid thou the gaoler straight

[8] Cf. *Welsh Med. Law*, W. 65 (6, 7).

Unlock this prisoner's fetters . . . Come, my man!
Thou shalt have food anon . . . Aye, and thy kin
Shall succoured be . . . Say, wilt thou service take
Beneath the Roman Eagles? There is room
To spare for such as thee . . . A likely lad,
Though wasted sore by penury and want . . .
Wilt take the chance that Fate holds out to thee? ''
Said Morgan, ''Aye, my Lord! That will I well,
And I will fight as one released from Hell . . .
So I may see my mother once again
And know my sisters safe.'' Said Maximus,
Speaking unto his freedman, the tall Goth,
Alloc by name, who never from his side
Was absent long . . . '' Good Alloc! Take this youth
And see thou to his gear . . . Give him good food,
See that he gets from Aerlew free of charge
For three months' space his tot of strong-brewed
mead . . .
Seek out his kinsfolk . . . Then let him be trained
To trail a lance with the Asturians . . .
Give him in charge to some skilled Duplicar . . .
Marcus for choice . . . Mead-Brewer, stand aside!
Judgement is given . . . What! Dar'st question it?
With noisy grumbling wouldst thou vex our ears?
Here's no sufficient cause to grant appeal . . .

Stand back . . . Remove him, Stators! Stay! Pay down
Upon the nail twelve pennies as thy fine
For gross contempt of Court . . . Wouldst keep thy post,
So get thee gone! . . . Now, Lucian! The next case.''

So passed the busy hours while Maximus
Dealt justice evenly to all who came,
Adjudging worth of limbs and price of scars . . .
Six kine and six score silver for a hand;
For finger, score of silver and a cow;
For a man's fore-tooth, pennies twenty-four;
Therewith the price of a conspicuous scar,
Which Elidyr pronounced was sixscore pence[9] . . .
If any lied or would conceal their crimes
The Questioners, by skilled use of their tools,
Without much trouble brought the truth to light . . .
Yet Maxen called not often for their aid;
His piercing looks, his angry frown, sufficed
To make false witnesses and liars quail.
Camlourou, *sarhad*, and *galanas* fines[10]
He did apportion fairly without fee;

[9] *Welsh Med. Law*, V. 19 (6, 9) etc.

[10] Welsh M. L. Cf. Glossary: *Camlwrw* = fine paid to the King. *Sarhad* = Insult fine. *Galanas* = Weregeld, or murder fine.

And *gobyr*[11] gave to whom they might be due,
That all men praised his judgements.
Then came there
The Frankish officer who kept the door,
Whose name was Arbogast, a proud fierce man
Of savage temper and unruly mind,
Ambitious, greedy and unscrupulous,
Yet a staunch fighter. Not long had he served
Beneath our Legate . . . He was sent, some thought,
With Richomer his countryman to mark
The deeds of Maximus . . . Yet others said
They were commended to our General by
The younger Theodosius.
Said this man,
" Legate, the post from Rome waits now without,
And certain prisoners brought here from the East
To exile doomed . . . Offenders 'gainst the Realm,
Who by the Emperors' orders have been sent
To expiate their crimes beneath thy hand "—
" Give me the Emperors' Letters," said my Lord,
" Then bring these men before me that I judge
How best to deal with them " . . . Justinian came,
The escort of the exiles, and with him
Those miserable ones who scarce had 'scaped

[11] *Gobyr* = fees.

From Valens' rage and Valentinian's wrath
With life and limb . . With hanging heads they stood . .
The Legate read the Imperial Letters; then
With troubled face gazed on the banished men.
Quoth he, "Alypius, thou? . . . Scarce may mine eyes
Believe so strange a sight . . . How can it be?
Thou, who wert Governor of Britain's Isle
A few short years ago, then left these shores
To rule at Antioch . . . Was it not thou
To whom the Emperor Julian gave charge . . .
A hopeless task . . . Straightway to build anew
That marvellous Temple at Jerusalem?
The elements fought against thee . . . Balls of fire
Split the foundations . . . Julian blamed thee not,
He praised thy zeal but bowed to Fate's decree . . .
It seems but yesterday thou honoured went
To take thy well-earned rest in Grecian lands . . .
Now thou'rt accused, condemned? For what, my friend?
Here is naught stated . . . What can be thy crime?"
Then spake grey-haired Alypius, old and sad[12] . . .
A man well known for probity of soul,
Of charming mildness, by all men beloved,

[12] Amm. Marcell. XXIX. (I) 44, also XXIII. (I) 2-3, and XXVIII. (I) 16.

Who late had led a quiet peaceful life,
Retired from cares of State and politics . . .
" Alas! Lord Legate, thou dost see me here
By evil Fortune chased from my dear home.
I had a country-house near a small town
Not far removed from great Byzantium . . .
My wife has long been dead . . . Thank God for that!
Mine eldest son served in the Guard at Rome;
Though he was somewhat rash as are young men,
Eager for sport and pleasure, yet a youth
Of courage proved and honour . . . He displeased
Harsh Maximin, Praetorian Prefect now,
But then Prefect of Rome, a cruel man . . .
'Twas but some trifling rudeness, yet for that
The lad was racked in public, bound and scourged;
Then by the common executioner
He was beheaded in the Forum . . . Ah!
In vain I made appeal . . . That was my crime . . .
Thenceforth I was marked man . . Soon Valens learnt
I had in my sore anguish cursed the names
Of Valentinian and of Maximin . . .
He had suspicious grown of everyone
Since the late trial of that wretched man
His Secretary Theodorus, who,
Being judged traitor, paid the heavy price.

With him were many others ta'en and bound . . .
Rich folk and poor, women and men alike;
Great nobles, burghers, freedmen, humble slaves,
All were accused . . . All roughly seized and haled
Before the Judges of the Emperor . . .
Tortured, condemned, and slain, till not a soul
In all Byzantium and the districts round
But dreamt of dark and dismal dungeon cells,
Of direst tortures and of dreadful death.
We crept in terror 'neath that awful fear,
For no man knew on whom the bolt would fall . .
Like sheep our folk were slaughtered without grace . .
I had a freedman, one Diogenes,
A fellow of low birth, but true and leal . . .
Or so I thought him, though a timid soul . . .
He was seized on one day and weeping dragged
Before the Imperial Judges, chief of whom
Modestus, then Praetorian Prefect . . . They
Had all their racks got ready . . . Weights and lead,
Scourges and other engines . . . Fire and steel . . .
In every Court of Justice at this time
Naught was there heard save the harsh raucous shouts
Of executioners, the anguished howls and shrieks
Of wretched gasping culprits, in their pain
Screaming midst clank of chains . . . Those horrid
yells . . .

I hear them still . . . Shall hear them till I die . . .
' Hold him fast, gird him! Hide him well . . So . . So!
Raise him, now drop! Thus let him hang . . . Oho!
The rascal soon shall tell all he doth know . . .
Stretch him until he does ' . . . So did they use
My poor Diogenes, and mauled his limbs
Until in his dire agony he moaned
That he would do their will, and he told lies . . .
I blame him not . . . Maybe I'd done the same
Had I been tortured thus . . . God rest his soul!
I saw his grievous pains, I heard his groans,
As 'gainst his will he gasped out broken words,
Accusing me, his patron, and my son . . .
My young son, Hierocles, a tender boy
Incapable of wickedness, too young to plot . . .
Yet treason vile the poor knave swore we planned,
Saying that we conspired to poison men,
And would attempt the lives of Emperors
In our mad folly . . . When his mangled limbs
No more might bear their bitter punishment
They dragged him out unto the Hippodrome,
There burnt him publicly . . . My son, poor lad,
Was also sentenced to that dreadful death,
And I had no hope either of escape . . .
But by some miracle, e'en as I prayed

That they would kill me first, my Judges stayed
Their cruel hands, moved by the urgent words
Of thy late colleague Theodosius, who
Stands high in favour with the Emperors . . .
And Duke of Moesia has been lately made . . .
He at that time stayed in Byzantium,
Preparing there for the Sarmatian War . . .
My sentence was commuted . . . Exiled, shamed,
Deprived of all my goods, a ruined man,
I was sent West in scornful mockery
Unto the Province I had ruled . . . Yet I
Am happy that I have with me my son . . .
The boy was tied unto the penal stake,
Stripped ready for the scourge and then the flame,
But Theodosius saved him from that fate . . .
He gave us clothes and money; in the hand
Of this young Tribune sent us overseas
As was appointed . . . Humbly now we come
As suppliants to thy feet, O Maximus!
Deal with us as thou wilt . . . What matters aught?
Thank God my wife is dead that she sees not
My bitter grief and shame " . . . He bowed his head
And wept . . . The Legate rose and came
To where the exile stood. He took his hand
And soothed the grief-worn man . . . " Have now no
care,

No sorrow more, Alypius . . . Thou shalt be
Free to go where thou wilt within this Isle;
Surely thine old friends shall be fain of thee;
And cherished shalt thou be by me and mine . . .
Till Valens learns the truth thou shalt be styled
Mine honoured guest . . . I find no fault in thee . . .
Nor shall thy son lack aught that I can give;
He shall serve in my Guard that I may prove
His loyalty and honour . . . Geraint, go!
Lead these my guests to Helen, my fair Queen,
And ask her of her gracious courtesy
That she entreat them well for love of me.

How now, Justinian! Whom hast thou there
Fettered and guarded? What! Do mine eyes see
The Tribune Claudian of the Jovians?
And must I greet a former comrade thus?
What is thy crime? '' . . . I heard the murmuring voice
Of Arbogast who stood near by the door
Where I too was on guard . . . " Why, by the Gods!
Dost hear our Legate? . . . Mark him, Richomer!
He'll pardon all of them . . . Too soft of heart,
Too lenient is this Viceroy . . . Not so I
Would deal with fallen men . . . Plague take the fool!
An Valentinian heard or Valens knew

Short tenure had he . . . What! Thou rascal boy!
Dost spy on us? '' He turned and cuffed me hard;
Whereat I cursed him, but 'twas inwardly . . .
I feared his cruel temper far too much
To brave him openly . . . I crept away
To the far side of the great wide-flung door,
Nearer to Maximus who would descend
From the Tribunal . . . It was the fourth hour[13]
When Judges rest awhile and break their fast . . .

Lord Maxen laid aside his Staff of State
With a deep sigh of heartfelt glad relief,
But stayed a moment, seeing the strained face
And anxious eyes of Claudian . . . " Nay, I'll hear
Thy crime and sentence first . . . Writ here I see
'Twas slander spoken of the Emperor,
And some words thou didst say to honour one
Who aimed at seizing the Imperial Power . . .
Thou favouredst Procopius, didst thou not?[14]
What folly urged thee, heedless Claudian?
Man, thou art lucky to stand here to-day!
Thy life is spared by Valentinian's grace,
But thou must bide in chains an exile doomed
For thy life's span . . . Thus it is written down . . .

[13] About 9.30 a.m. [14] Amm. Marcell. XXIX. (III) 7.

I cannot help thee, Claudian, nor make less
Thy sentence, but at least thou mayst declare
What brought thee to this pass."
Said the young man,
Redd'ning with shame and grief, though proud his air,
" Why, noble Maximus! If thou wilt hear
My sorry tale, I'll tell it . . . Then judge thou
If I deserve these fetters . . . Thou knew'st well
Sallust my friend . . . May Mithra guard his soul!
He was my senior in the Jovians . . .
Alas! Poor Sallust paid full price for what
The Emperor called our treason . . . It was none!
An evil knave, despicable and base . . .
A soldier whom for sake of discipline
We had to punish several times for theft
And other matters . . . This malignant wretch
Accused us both of treason . . . We were tried,
Not by the Legionary Officers
As was our right by custom and by law,
But by some Captains of the Cavalry,
Appointed as our Judges . . . They were bid
By Valentinian's self to sentence us . . .
Me unto exile . . . Sallust . . . O ye Gods!
The gallant Sallust unto shameful death
Beneath the rods . . . Yet privily came word,

As from the Emperor, that we should be
Reprieved at the last moment . . . 'Twas a form
To shew the Roman World that Jovians
Were not exempt from sternest discipline . . .
For, said the Emperor, with his cruel smile . . .
So I was told . . . ' Men say I am too kind,
Favour o'er much my Legions . . . I will shew
Justice, then mercy ' . . . What was in his mind
I know not, Maximus, but this I know . . .
My friend and I heard sentence passed, and then,
Without the respite that by Law is due,
They led us to the Forum, hoping still
For that which never came . . . The saving word . . .
We doubted not the Emperor would keep faith . . .
We held our heads high, confident . . . Then . . . then,
Sallust was not reprieved . . . I saw him die '' . . .
He shuddered and turned pale, then fiercely cried,
" They led him out and he went willingly,
Trusting as I in Valentinian's word . . .
The perjured swine! . . . May devils roast his soul! . . .
Nay! I'll not hold my peace! Thou'dst say the same
Hadst thou seen thy best friend die such a death . . .
Stript naked, bound unto the stakes, his neck
Fast in the fork; scourged then with the sharp rods
Till his torn shoulders, lacerated flanks,

Could not be seen so bathed were they in blood!
Yet he reviled not, nor made coward's moan . . .
Though once or twice 'tis true I heard him groan . . .
Deceived and broken-hearted as he was,
He faltered not . . . Was brave unto the end,
And bare his shame and pain right manfully . . .
Would to the Gods I'd died with thee, dear friend!
Now am I ruined, broken, tossed aside,
Disgraced and shamed . . . Would God I too had
died " . . .
He groaned and hid his face.
Said Maximus,
" Thou hast borne much for little cause meseems,
And I will do my best for thee, old friend . . .
Yet am I bidden by the Emperor's hand
To use thee as a slave to work in chains . . .
His word must be obeyed : For three months' space
Shalt thou wear fetters, sign of thy disgrace . . .
I have no option . . . But thou shalt serve me
In mine own Household, and thereafter be
Freed from these galling chains and by my hand
Raised to such office as thy conduct shews
Thou art most fit to fill . . . Justinian, see
This convict given into Alloc's charge . . .
Give him a change of dress, with food and wine,

Nor keep him from the Baths . . . Hard is his lot . .
Stern is the Emperor Valentinian :
Harsh to his foes and cruel to his friends . . .
I loved poor Sallust well " . . .
Sighing he came
From the Tribunal down; then loudly called,
" Bring cates and wine, for we will break our fast . . .
Let other suitors wait " . . . He paced the Hall,
Conversing with friends in cheerful wise,
The cares of Justice setting on one side . . .
But little ate he and drank sparingly,
And somewhat strained and thoughtful grew his brow.

Came there in haste and with a gloomy mien
The Prefect Andragathius, " Lord," said he,
" News from the North is here . . . Duke Conan waits,
All muddy from the road and hot with haste,
Craving an audience of thee instantly."
Said Maximus, " Bid the Duke enter . . . Greet him
fittingly . . .
Now what wants Conan Meriadoc here? "
Muttered he wondering, " I distrust the man " . . .
Said he unto Gerontius at his side,
Returned from his late errand to the Queen . . .
" Yet he shews kind of late, seems well-disposed,

Of open, honest, and unfeignèd mind . . .
I would not now misjudge this man that he
Was once my most inveterate enemy . . .
See! Where he comes, o'ercast his troubled brow . . .
Some weighty news he bears . . . Lord Conan, Hail!
What wouldest thou of Cornwall's Queen that thou
Comest in haste, thus mire-stained from the road,
To seek her Viceroy? Or perchance wouldst thou
Speak with the Roman Legate? In me see
Both Offices combined . . . As friend of both
I bid thee hearty welcome, noble Duke!"
Said Conan hurriedly, "A truce with words!
I greet thee, Legate, as one sore oppressed
With over-heavy news . . . Treason is rife . . .
Eugen, the treacherous Scot-King, plans to light
The torch of war throughout the Alban Land . . .
He marches south . . . Perchance e'en now doth ride
With thousand savage Hillmen in his train
Towards the Wall of Hadrian . . . Broken lies
The Antoninian Barrier say my spies . . .
And there is worse behind . . . Base treachery
Lurks hidden in thy Camp, O Maximus . . .
How can I tell thee? . . . Yet first hear some good
That may ere long so countercheck this ill
That soon the Roman Eagles shall soar high,

Flapping their wings above their fallen foes
As in the old days " . . . Maximus drew nigh . . .
He gripped Duke Conan's arm, stared in his face . . .
Grim was his look as stern and high he spake . . .
" Out with thy news, man! Palter not with me . . .
What is this treason, what thy remedy?
Why have my spies not told me this before?
True honest men are my skilled officers . . .
I have the Northern Coasts well watched . . . How then
Could dark conspiracy contrive to hatch
So foul a plot and I not know thereof? "
Said Conan mordantly, his eyes agleam,
His lips half curled in a sardonic grin
That quickly vanished almost ere 'twas seen . . .
" Thy trust has been misplaced, Lord Maximus,
As I will shew thee soon without a doubt . . .
But listen first unto the word I bring
From Heirgust, Nectan's son, the Pictish King . . .
He still bides true unto his plighted word;
He proffers friendship, offers aid in arms
To quell this trouble . . . Since old Cormac's death
He hath disputed Eugen's claim to rule
As Ard-Righ o'er the Picts " . . . Said Maximus,
" I trust not Heirgust nor his Pictish kin . . .
I thought young Eugen would rest true to Rome

For sake of our old friendship . . . I love well
Ethodius, his brave brother . . . Loath am I
To side with Heirgust 'gainst the Dalriad King . . .
That he revolts sure hides some mystery . . .
There's more behind . . . I blame not till I hear . . .
What know'st thou of this matter, Conan . . . Say! ''
Quoth Conan calmly, " Lord, it grieves me sore . . .
I also once loved well the Scottish King
Till he proved false unto his plighted word . . .
Yet might I not withstand him even then
For mine Oath's sake that honour bids me keep . . .
Am I not sworn to hold true peace with him?[15]
But as for thee, this folly doth release
The Legate of great Rome from the late vows
Made by the Duke of Britain . . . Why, my Lord!
Thou hast the right . . . Thou only, Maximus . . .
To punish him for his foul treachery . . .
Send thou to Heirgust! Seest thou not, fair Lord!
That thou by reason of their discord shalt
Secure firm peace and lasting victory.
Make friends now with the Picts, crush rebel Scots . . .
Then, an thou wilt, forgive thy boyhood's friend . . .
Ethodius can be spared . . . Eugen alone
Shall pay the price and for his sin atone . . .

[15] Cf. Fordun (trans. Skene) *Hist. Scot.* IV. p. 68.

Hearken, my Lord " . . Long time he spake and urged
Good reasons for his counsel . . . Some I heard
But much escaped me, for they both spake low . . .
This was the upshot . . . Maximus called me
And bade me write . . . " Be thou my clerk to-day . . .
Quintus, I trust thee well . . Write now, my boy! . .
Yet stay! . . . I would hear more . . . Nor will I act
Until I feel that I am justified . . .
Conan, I am not satisfied as yet . . .
Eugen the Scot at least is Christian man;
He was baptized last year, as thou dost know . . .
Heirgust's a savage heathen, fierce and wild,
Who worships devils "—" Nay," said Conan, " Nay!
He hath abjured his idols . . . Knowst thou not
How holy Andrew worked that miracle? "—
" What meanest thou, my Lord? Saint Andrew died
Long years agone, how can such marvel be? "
Said Conan gravely, " Yet this did befall . . .
Take tent to me and I will tell thee how[15A] . . .

In Greece at one time in th' Achaian Land[16]
A monk there was in Dacian City found
Called Regulus, a faithful priest and famed;

[15A] Pay heed.

[16] H. Boece, trans. Stewart, I. p. 613 (18,990); Holinshed, V. (*Scotland*) p. 112.

Who, for that he had great authority,
Not long ago was by the Augustus sent . . .
The Emperor Valens . . . On a pilgrimage
Unto the grave where good Saint Andrew lies;
And in his company right many men,
Devout of life, went too as was decreed.
Now when they came unto that Sacred Place
Where the blest Saint's most Holy Body lay,
Upon that very night a vision came
To Regulus, as he knelt at his prayers,
Straightway commanding him that he should take
The right arm-bone of Andrew the good Saint,
With fingers three, and toes, from the right hand
And foot . . . No less, no more, must be . . .
Keeping them close that they should not be seen.
These should he take then by the nearest way
Unto the Land of Alba's Isle that lies
Far to the North within the Western Sea . . .
' For,' said the Heavenly Messenger, ' Soon then,
Within a little while the Island folk
Shall hold that Relic in such reverence
That to the Apostle mickle joy shall be,
And honour also to the See of Rome,
Perpetually to the Day of Doom.'

Then Regulus, as I did understand,
As bidden kept the Angel's high command . . .
A ship as soon as she might ready be
Right secretly he furnished forth to fare.
By night he with his fellows took the sea.
And gave that ship in God's own Hands to steer.
They sailed for many a day through the Greek Sea
Unto the Land of Lusitania;
Thence sailing ever on day after day
They came at length unto Armorica,
And thence in three or maybe four days' time
They came at last unto the Alban Isle,
To that part callèd Pechtland . . . Here it chanced
By force of flood their ship on sandbank brake
Off Otholyneum,[17] and these folk lost all
That they had with them save their lives alone
And that most blessed Relic of the Saint,
Which thus brought them through peril to the shore
Unto that place where now a City stands
That is St. Andrews called, beside the sea
Upon a pleasant plain . . . There rested they
And thought in that fair spot they would remain . . .
Rigmonath was it called in olden days[18] . .
Not long had they been there than o'er the land

[17] Fifeshire. [18] Cf. Skene, *Celtic Scotland*, I. 183.

Word went that here a Holy Relic came
Through God's grace to the people of those coasts,
Then out of every house both far and near
The folk ran flocking this strange sight to see . . .
And all those that were sick that thither came,
Both hale and sound were then made of their sores . . .
Right crooked men were able made and strong,
And dumb men spake and deaf men gan to hear,
While blind men gat their sight and made good cheer.
Heirgust, the King of Picts, upon a day
Came there in person, as myself did see,
With great meekness and all humility,
Right rev'rently low kneeling on his knee
With deep devotion in this hallowed place,
That Relic in his arms he did embrace;
Oft kissing it, with sundry sacrifice
And orison he humbly urged his plea
To be made Christian man . . . His son lay sick
In grievous pains and he would save the child,
Whom neither wizards' word nor witches' spell
Had succoured nor could heal. Then Regulus
Bade him have faith and blessed him solemnly,
Giving him comfort. But King Heirgust stayed
Upon his knees right long ere he would rise . . .
And lo! There came one running speedily,

'My Lord! The child soft sleeps, nor longer cries . . .
Thy leeches say that Drust thy son shall live!'
Then Heirgust bowed his head and wept aloud
For very joy. Rising, he went apart
And was instructed in the Christian Faith . . .
His savage breast subdued by God's good Grace.

On that same spot where he had knelt and prayed
He buildeth now a Temple wondrous fair,
Of stone and lime constructed, that none there
Had ever thought to see, and a fit place
He hath made for God's servant, Regulus,
Where he and his folk may in honour bide
As they now do . . . Oh! Marvellous fair, my Lord,
Doth this same Church appear . . . For all the Quire
In silver sheen right worthily is wrought . . .
Cruet and Cross and Chandler to bear light,
Chalice and Paten of bright burnished gold,
Both Book and Bell and costly Vestments fine,
With revenues right rich apportioned too,
In honour of the Apostle Andrew's Name,
Which in this self-same place shall honoured be
By men on earth until the Crack of Doom!
Then Heirgust was baptized as Christian man,
And for a time his thoughts were all of peace.

But now his heart is moved to wrath again
'Gainst Eugen the Scot-King, who, with base guile
And envy filled, doth daily do him wrong,
Till all the land with discord by their strife
Is hourly wrung, and no man counts his life
Safe from the peril sharp of fire and sword . . .
Now, Maximus! Take counsel! Now, be strong!
Consider Heirgust's claim . . . How Eugen steals
His land and title from him . . . Judge, my Lord,
If the time be not opportune for thee
With busy care great diligence to shew,
That by their feud, which doth increase, thou may'st
Advantage seize for Britain and for Rome! ''

Long time sat Maximus, his eyes cast down,
And on his elbows leant, so hid his brow
That none might see his face . . . Then suddenly
Sprang to his feet . . . '' I am resolved,'' cried he,
'' Write, Quintus, as I bid thee.'' Thus he spake:

'' O noble Heirgust, far-famed King of Picts!
Thee greeteth well the Legate Maximus:
Letting thee wit that him misliketh sore
The great displeasure, dolour, and the care,
The injurious acts now daily done to thee

By the proud Scots who are both false and sly . . .
The which have been, as their King's acts do prove,
Stern mortal foes both unto Us and ye . . .
Though, of a sooth, We hardly dare to say
That ye with Us were well-belovèd aye . . .
Yet trow We certainly that might We be
Wer't not for the base cunning of these Scots.
Nor is there aught that Maximus more craves
Than for thy friendship, stablished firm and sure.
His goodwill and his Queen's shalt thou possess,
With succour due . . . when thou shalt ask for it . . .
Thus to subdue . . . when thou shalt choose to act . . .
These subtle Scots who are both vain and rude,
Who long to thee and thine have done much harm.
Then trust in Us, when thou shalt feel inclined
To fall on them . . . Aye! And each one destroy! . . .
Know Us, O Heirgust! For thy lasting friend
If thou bide true to Us as We to thee . . .
Signed by thy Well-wisher in everything,
Rome's Legate, Cornwall's Viceroy, who is styled
The Duke of Britain, Clemens Maximus."

Then Conan, hearing this, was right well pleased,
Yet said, " My Lord, ere this be fully sealed
Wilt not take counsel with the British Lords,

Or with thine officers? " The Legate smiled,
" I act upon thy tidings, Duke, and none
But thou and I shall know what has been done.
I answer for my deeds to Rome alone . . .
The Queen's will is as mine . . . No need have I
To call a Council. I go mine own gait
When I would get things done."
Then called he there
His Secretary and the Letter sealed . . .
" Call hither Syrus! "[19] bade he, who being come,
" Syrus! " quoth he, "As Herald go thou North,
Bearing my message to the King of Picts.
Take thou an Escort from the Gallic Horse
And ride unto Orrea where he bides.[20]
Go not by York but take the Western Road
By Deva and by Luguvallium,[21]
Nor tarry on the way. Be secret, sure . . .
Thine errand tell to none . . . To Heirgust say
Thou knowest naught of what is writ herein;
Nor tell him aught howe'er he question thee
Of news or gossip from the Court or Camp;

[19] Cf. Greg. Turon. II. 9 (389).

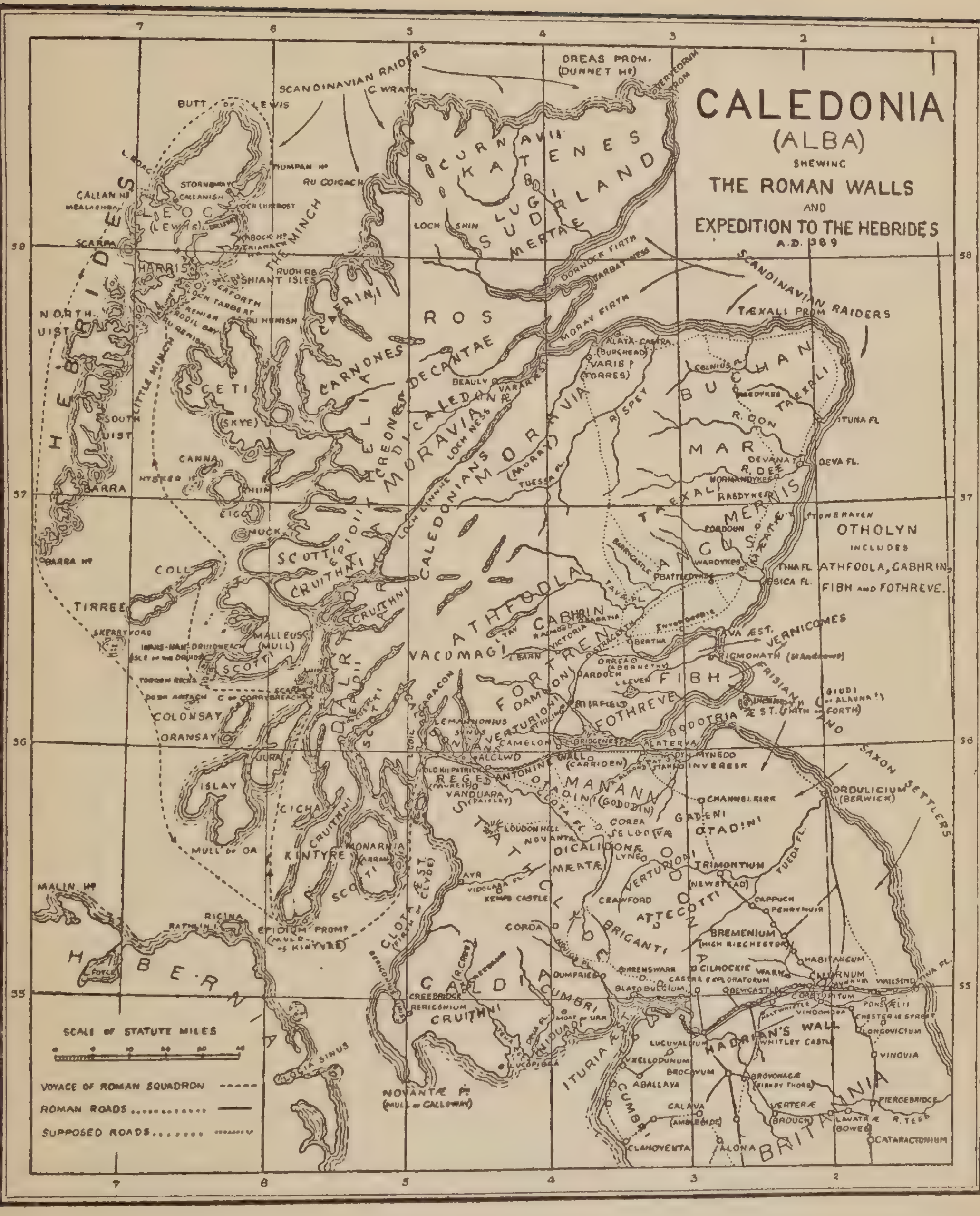
[20] Orrea = Abernethy, the Capital of the Pictish Kings. Cf. A. Small, *Roman Antiquities in Fife*, ch. VI. Cf. also Skene, *Celtic Scotland*, I. 74.

[21] Chester and Carlisle.

But bring his Answer back with fitting speed . . .
Be prompt, be secret, as the time doth need,
I trust thee, Syrus . . . See thou fail'st me not."

He being gone, said Maximus, " Say now,
Duke Conan, what is this thou hast to tell
Of hidden plots and foul conspiracies . . .
I understand thy warning not . . . Make clear
Thy meaning, Sir . . . But think not, dream not, I
May easily be moved to doubt my men.
I know that they are true, each one of them . . .
My soldiers love me . . . And I cherish them . . .
Their honour is as mine . . . Accusing them
Is to impugn mine own integrity . . .
So, Conan, be thou warned! And now, say on! "
The Duke, a moment startled, gazed at him;
Then with soft voice and studied courtesy
He slowly told his right unwelcome tale.

End of Volume IV


CALEDONIA
(ALBA)
SHEWING
THE ROMAN WALLS
AND
EXPEDITION TO THE HEBRIDES
A.D. 369
SCALE OF STATUTE MILES
VOYAGE OF ROMAN SQUADRON
ROMAN ROADS
SUPPOSED ROADS
OTHOLYN
INCLUDES
ATHFODLA, CABHRIN,
FIBH AND FOTHREVE.
SCANDINAVIAN RAIDERS
SCANDINAVIAN RAIDERS
SAXON SETTLERS
FRISIAN ANO
OREAS PROM.
(DUNNET HD)
C. WRATH
BUTT OF LEWIS
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NORTH UIST
SOUTH UIST
LITTLE MINCH
BARRA
BARRA HD
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TARBAT NESS
MORAY FIRTH
ROS
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ESICA FL.
TAVA FL.
ATHFODLA
CABHRIN
VACOMAGI
TAVA AEST.
VERNICOMES
FORTREN
FIBH
FOTHREVE
BODOTRIA
BIODI
(OR ALAUNA ?)
FORTH
SCOTTI
CRUITHNI
DALRIADA
LEMANNONIUS SINUS
ANTONINE WALL
(CARRIDEN)
CAMELON
ALCLWD
OLD KILPATRICK
REGED
VANDUARA
(PAISLEY)
MANANN
OTADINI
(GODODIN)
CHANNELKIRK
ORDULICIUM
(BERWICK)
GADENI
SELGOVAE
CORBA
NOVANTAE
DICALIDONAE
MAEATAE
LOUDON HILL
AYR
KEMPS CASTLE
TRIMONTIUM
(NEWSTEAD)
CAPPUCH
PENNYMUIR
ATTECOTTI
BRIGANTI
BREMENIUM
(HIGH RIECHESTER)
HABITANCUM
CORODA
CLOTA AEST.
(CLYDE)
GALDIA
CREEBRIDGE
RERIGONIUM
CRUITHNI
NOVANTAE PR.
(MULL OF GALLOWAY)
CUMBRI
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BLATOBULGIUM
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VINDOMORA
CHESTER LE STREET
LONGOVICIUM
VINOVIA
HADRIAN'S WALL
WHITLEY CASTLE
LUGUVALLIUM
VXELLODUNUM
BROCAVUM
BROVONACAE
(KIRKBY THORE)
ABALLAVA
ITURIA AEST.
CALAVA
(AMBLESIDE)
VERTERAE
BROUGH
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(BOWES)
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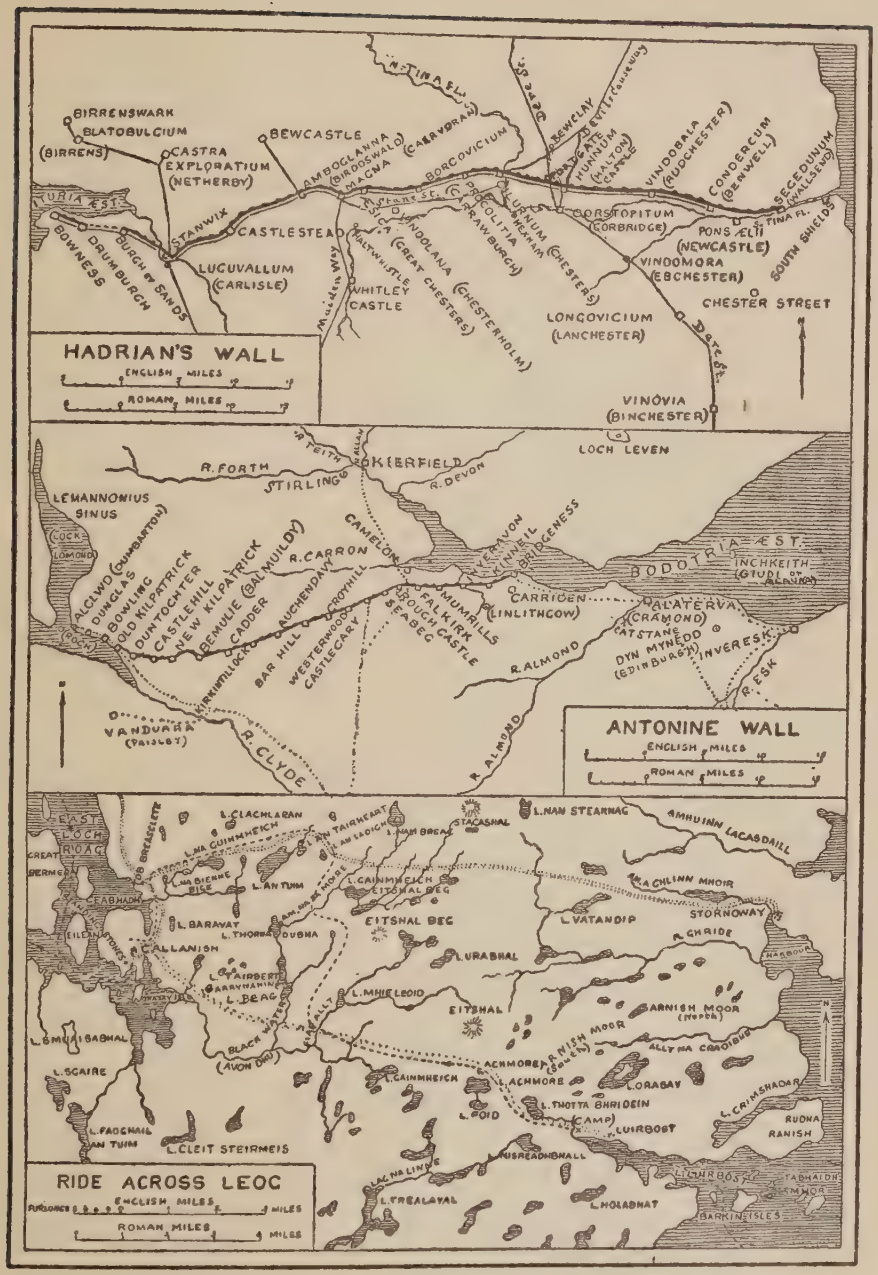
PIERCEBRIDGE
CATARACTONIUM
CLANOVENTA
ALONA
BRITANNIA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ROMAN MILES
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BLATOBULCIUM
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AMBOGLANNA (BIRDOSWALD)
MAGNA (CARVORAN)
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N. TINA FL.
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BEWCLAY
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(GREAT CHESTERS)
PROCOLITIA (CARRAWBURGH)
CILURNUM (CHESTERS)
HEXHAM
CORSTOPITUM (CORBRIDGE)
VINDOBALA (RUDCHESTER)
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S. TINA FL.
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VINDOMORA (EBCHESTER)
CHESTER STREET
LONGOVICIUM (LANCHESTER)
VINOVIA (BINCHESTER)
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LOCH LEVEN
LEMANNONIUS SINUS
LOCK LOMOND
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